LIVES

OF THE

SAINTS AND BLESSED

OF THE THREE ORDERS OF

SAINT FRANCIS

TRANSLATED FROM THE "AUREOLE SERAPHIQUE"

OF THE

VERY REV. FATHER LEON

EX-PROVINCIAL OF THE FRIARS MINOR OF THE OBSERVANCE

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August 13.

Blessed Peter of Molliano. Priest.

[1442—1490.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

This blessed man was born in the town of Molliano, in the diocese of Camerino, situated in the March of Ancona. After receiving his earliest education in his native town, he was sent to the celebrated university of Perugia for his further studies. There he distinguished himself during his three years of residence. In 1467, he heard a sermon from the lips of Blessed Dominic of Leonissa, Provincial of the Friars of the Observance. Deeply touched by his words, Peter seriously reflected on the vanity of all worldly aims in comparison with the true happiness promised to the servants of God. Faithful to the inspirations of grace, he bade farewell to the world and went straight to the preacher, who had spoken so powerfully to his heart, to ask to be received into the family of St. Francis. Peter was then twenty-five.

When he had finished his studies and his rare virtue had been well proved, he was sent as companion to St. James della Marca, one of the pillars of the Observance, the most famous son of St. Bernardine of Siena after St. John Capistran. Under the guidance of such a master, Peter made rapid progress in the path of sanctity and became a worthy minister of the Gospel. He exercised his ministry in many of the provinces of Italy. His sweet and loving words spread peace amidst discord, gathered sinners together to

walk carefully on the narrow road and softened the hardest hearts. God bore witness to His love for Peter by granting many miracles to his prayers, which he worked by the sign of the Cross or the invocation of the Holy Name of Jesus.

The Duke, Julius Cesar Varani, sovereign prince of Camerino, honoured him by his friendship and consulted him on all his important business. Peter was also the director to his daughter, Blessed Baptista Varani, who was a nun of the Poor Clares at Camerino. On all sides Peter was held in veneration, most of all amongst his religious brethren. Three times he was named Vicar Provincial in the Province of the Marches, once in that of Rome. In 1472, the General Chapter held at Aquila, sent him as Commissioner to the island of Candia. He fulfilled all his different charges with singular prudence; his charity, his zeal, his intelligence were most remarkable. After a life spent in this way, our Lord revealed to him its approaching end, and just as he was again named to be Provincial of the Marches, he was called to his reward in Heaven, July the second, 1490. His spiritual child, Blessed Baptista Varani, has left us the account of his holy death. The account was written to her relation, Isabella of Gonzaga, Duchess of Urbino, who held Blessed Peter of Molliano in great veneration.

"You must know, dear lady," writes Blessed Baptista, "that our blessed Father came to Camerino on the feast of the Visitation of our Blessed Lady. As he rode into the town he stopped his horse at its entrance. He raised his eyes to Heaven, remaining quite still for some moments, then he lowered his eyes and looked round joyfully to his companions as if he had heard a piece of joyful news. He only said to them, 'Let us enter the town.' This was on a Friday. On the following Sunday he was seized with violent fever, combined with great pains in his head and stomach. From that moment he could take no food. During his last sickness he was always patient, always gay, always smiling.

He was for ever consoling his sorrowing sons with sweet words, with harmless jokes, as he had done all his life. So much so, that my lord, my father, said to him many times, 'Father Vicar, you will certainly die laughing!' You must know, dear lady, that generally, dying persons are not joyous, but I am certain that this true son of St. Francis was singing in his heart with our Holy Father, 'The happiness I expect is so great that all trouble is a delight.'

"Eight days before his happy death, he made his last confession to the nephew of blessed James della Marca, and prepared himself to receive the Sacred Body of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though he was dangerously ill and very weak, the good Father would go himself to receive our Lord, rather than ask for our Lord to come to him. He thought himself the greatest of sinners, though he was, in truth, a holy and saintly man. They tried to persuade him to spare himself the fatigue, but he rose and went to the church, followed by his brethren. After the *Confiteor*, he raised his eyes to the Blessed Sacrament, then he prostrated himself on the ground and with tears and sobs confessed again and again that he was a sinner and full of iniquity. Like a second St. Jerome he cried out, 'Most sweet Saviour Jesus Christ, I implore Thee by Thy bitter Passion to draw me to Thyself out of this prison of my flesh, as soon as I have received Thee. Divine Majesty, Sovereign sweetness, do not leave me far from Thee. Thou knowest, my most sweet Lord, that I have always desired and sought Thee and Thy good pleasure. Unite my exiled soul to Thee. This miserable life is not life to me, but a daily death, and the whole world, for love of Thee, seems to me but infernal darkness. Take me from this miserable life, my God, my Creator, my Redeemer, the Light of my eyes, the Love and the Life of my soul.' Such words, said with the deepest devotion and humility, touched the hearts of all present and they shed abundant tears. At the end of half an hour he returned to his brethren saying, 'I beg you

for the love of God, to join me in begging our Lord to take me out of this life as soon as I have received the Blessed Sacrament.'"

Blessed Baptista Varani then relates how the holy man had to resist the temptations of the devil during two whole days. The devil appeared at his poor pallet, under different forms, trying to make him think that all his life and preaching was a lie and a delusion. The holy man desired his brethren to read the Passion according to St. Matthew. Strengthened by this he confounded the spirit of darkness and was triumphant in the combat. They administered the Sacrament of Extreme Unction to him. "After receiving this Sacrament," continues Blessed Baptista Varani, "he addressed himself to his brethren in such touching words, that the Holy Spirit seemed to be speaking in him. They were all deeply moved." He spoke particularly about the blessings of holy poverty, finishing his exhortation by these remarkable words, "My brothers, be quite sure that he is holy who faithfully observes our Rule according to his vow." As for me, having been informed of all I have related to you, I felt intense grief, fearing that we were going to lose this good father, this faithful shepherd. Nevertheless I sent a prudent person to him to ask him if he really knew that he was going to die this time. The good Father sent word that he should shortly die, he said to my messenger, "My son, pay no attention whether I speak or whether I laugh, I do it for a good motive, but by Sunday I shall no longer be in this world." This happened on the Wednesday before his death, the eve of St. Mary Magdalene. I shall never forget that day. That evening he was wept for by all the sisters of the monastery, including me, his unworthy child. O very holy Father, you say truly, it is for a good motive that you speak and that you laugh, it is that you may not be thought a saint, but the more you tried to hide it, the more the Holy Spirit showed your virtues. You must know, dear lady, that three years befor

his death, he was known in all the Provinces of the March, as the "holy Father." Wherever he went he was followed by a crowd of admiring people. When he had to go to the Chapter at your city of Urbino, he passed through Camerino and stopped at our monastery. When he left us he was surrounded by such a crowd, that without the help of some young men his very life would have been in peril. God alone knows what we suffered that day fearing an accident for him. I have made this digression, to show that the more a man tries to hide himself from men, the more it pleases God to manifest his merits.

"The Thursday, the feast of St. Mary Magdalene, my lord, my father, went to visit his holy director, according to his duty, and the pleasure he had in going often to see him. On this occasion he took with him his two sons and many doctors and gentlemen of the city. He found him full of gaiety and rejoicing in the Feast. When he saw that the prince had brought his two sons solemnly to see him, he felt at once that he ought not to let the good opportunity pass. He began to speak to my two brothers in the sweetest words, while everyone listened with profound silence. He exhorted these young lords to study well, to love justice, to observe the law of God and he commanded them specially to assist the poor. He counselled them, above all, to love each other. These words were strengthened by quotations from the Holy Scriptures, and from civil and canonical law. Every one was edified by his earnest and eloquent words, which lasted for an hour. After this he gave them his blessing. During the night of Saturday and Sunday, July the twenty-fifth, Feast of the Apostle St. James, at the moment when the friars ring the bell before the *Te Deum* at Matins, this blessed soul flew to Heaven. The Name of Jesus was on his lips as he left this world. Yes, he left this world with that Holy Name on his lips by Whose virtue he had worked so many miracles during his life.

"O blessed Father! O happy Father! what soul is sufficiently holy, what heart noble enough, what intelligence high enough to understand the greatness of that glory, of that love, of that ineffable sweetness which your blessed soul felt in that moment? O my beloved Father! thought fails me when I wish to dream of the joy your blessed soul felt when you passed from the darkness of this world to the brightness of eternal life, from war to perpetual peace, from a stormy sea to a safe port, from death to life. What can I say more? Without doubt you have sung with the Angels those words of the Psalmist, 'As we have heard, so have we seen, in the city of the Lord of Hosts. . . . How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. . . . For better is one day in Thy courts above thousands. . . . Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord. . . .' Yes, to enter into the joy of the heavenly nuptials, the embraces of the Eternal Father, into the beauty of the Beatific Vision. Rejoice and exult, O daughter of Sion, O holy and blessed soul, rejoice and sing unceasingly O beloved Father! For now you are celebrating your celestial nuptials and are for ever assured of the eternal possession of your God, of your Love, of your sweet Redeemer. From the height of your glory remember me, your unworthy daughter, and all your children, who in their needs implore your help and your protection.

"Now that this blessed soul is gone to the heavenly country, amidst the choirs of Angels, I will speak to you, dear lady, of his holy body. To prevent a great crowd of people coming too early to the convent, the Friars did not ring the bell at once. But the sun had not risen before it became known all through the town. 'The Saint is dead! The Saint is dead!' The body was exposed in the church, where multitudes came to visit it, and happy were those who managed to get near enough to touch it. He lay there so beautiful. A sweet scent came from the body which filled

everyone with admiration and devotion, he seemed to be sweetly asleep. They cut pieces from his habit, and some bold men tried even to cut morsels of his flesh, which obliged the Friars to place the body in a little chapel, enclosed with iron gates. His brethren desired to bury him the same day according to his own orders to them, 'When I am dead,' he said to them, 'tie my feet with a cord, then let me down into the vault. Do not make any solemn ceremony. A *Requiem* Mass is all I want.' My Father, therefore, gave the orders for his burial, to the Friars. His body remained in the common vault for eleven months, that is to say, until the arrival of his Excellency the Lord Duke, your husband, as you have been fully informed. Our good God wished to manifest to the world how worthy and beloved was this great servant of His, for after his death he worked many miracles, confirming those he had worked during his life."

Twelve years after the death of Blessed Peter, the Friars of the Observance of Camerino were obliged to leave their first convent to establish themselves within the town. His body was found incorrupt. They carried it to their new church and also the body of Blessed John of Parma. At the last suppression of the religious Orders in Italy, the church of the Franciscans of Camerino was closed. The Archbishop had the relics of the two famous disciples of St. Francis taken to the Cathedral. The long established devotion to Blessed Peter of Molliano, was confirmed by Pope Clement XIII. (His feast is kept only by the Friars Minor of the Observance.)

The Blessed Baptista Varani, who was herself favoured with great supernatural lights, assures us that Blessed Peter of Molliano is very powerful in his intercession for those who invoke him. "Ask this blessed man," she says, "with faith and devotion, to obtain all you need from God. I assure you that he will obtain it, for God has promised this to those who are devout to him. I say this on the strength

of my own experience, to the honour of the Saint. Since his death, I have received, by his intercession, such great graces from God that I know not how to express them."

August 14.

Blessed Sanctes of Urbino, Lay-brother.

[1340—1385.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

Blessed Sanctes was a member of the noble family of Brancanini, who afterwards took the name of Guiliani. He was born in the town of Monte-Fabri, in the arch diocese of Urbino. His childhood and youth were spent under the paternal roof and later on at Urbino to complete his studies. He was a model of innocence and goodness. When he reached the age of twenty, a sad accident decided his vocation for the religious life. One day he was suddenly attacked by one of his relations, and in self-defence he lifted his sword to defend himself, when unfortunately he wounded his relation, dangerously, by a slash on the thigh, which proved mortal in a few days. Though he was perfectly innocent, Sanctes was quite inconsolable. He gave up the profession of arms, which his parents had wished him to follow, and embraced the religious life. He chose the Order of St. Francis, hoping to be forgotten by the world and thus be able to expiate, by great austerities, the trouble of his conscience. He chose, out of humility, to enter as a lay brother.

Humility and penance were the virtues most dear to him. His food consisted of herbs or fruit from the garden which he eat with bread. His unceasing prayer to our Lord was to suffer much in his body and especially in that part of it where he had wounded his assailant. His prayers were

heard, for a very painful ulcer came on his thigh, which was quite incurable and from which he suffered to the day of his death. The trace of this wound can be seen to this day on his incorrupt body, after five centuries have elapsed.

His Superiors knowing his virtue and his gifts, made him, for many years, the novice master of the lay brothers. He begged to be relieved of this office, desiring only the lowest place, to which at last they agreed. The good lay brother had a most special devotion to Holy Mass and our Lord, on one occasion, was pleased to grant him a special favour as a reward. One day he was prevented, by his employment, from assisting at the Holy Sacrifice; he heard the Elevation bell and knelt for a moment in adoration; suddenly the walls that separated him from the sanctuary, opened, he could see the priest at the altar and adored our Lord in the Blessed Eucharist; then the walls closed again and he quietly continued his work of obedience, overwhelmed with consolation. Like his holy Father St. Francis, Sanctes had an extraordinary power over animals. Once he had taken a pack ass with him to the forest to get some wood, he forgot the ass, when he returned home, and went the next day to look for it. He found the poor brute dead and being devoured by a savage wolf. The holy man addressed himself to the wolf, complaining loudly of this treatment of the property of the convent, commanding him to repair the injury by labouring himself. The wolf, meek as a lamb, allowed himself to be harnessed and be used for the wants of the convent.

When he was dangerously ill he asked the infirmarian to give him some cherries, which he would find in the garden. It was the month of January, and the infirmarian remarked that it was impossible to find cherries at that time of the year. Sanctes begged of him still to grant his request; and when the infirmarian went into the garden, he saw there a cherry tree, covered with fruit of the finest kind. Another time when the provisions for the community had failed, he

took a lay brother with him into the garden to see if some radishes, which he had sown the night before, could be picked. The lay brother laughed at his simplicity, till he saw, that, not only had the seeds germinated, but that the radishes were fit to pull, till they filled a large basket. Many other great miracles made him famous in life, but the homage of men was nothing to him; to belong to God was his one thought and desire. He had not long to wait. At the age of forty-four, having spent twenty-four years in religious life, our Lord called him to Himself on the eve of the Assumption, 1390, at the convent of St. Mary of Scotaneto, near Monte-Barochio, in the diocese of Pesaro.

They buried him in the common cemetery, but the miracles worked by his intercession obliged them to remove his body to their church, where crowds came to venerate the incorrupt body. The convent of St. Mary belongs to the Friars Minor of the Observance. The long established devotion to Blessed Sanctes was confirmed by Pope Clement XIV. (His feast is only kept by the Friars of the Observance.)

August 16.

St. Roch of Montpellier.

[1295—1327.]

Of the Third Order.

St. Roch is one of those servants of God whose name has become popular, and is still held in veneration, not only in countries which witnessed his virtues, but also in those, still more numerous, which have felt the power of his intercession since his death. He is invoked against the terrible scourge of the plague, and God has been pleased to justify this confidence in him by countless cures.[1]

The Saint was born at Montpellier, about 1295. He was of noble family, his father, named John, was, it is believed, governor of the town, his mother's name was Libéra.[2] The husband and wife faithfully observed the Law of God.

[1] St. Roch is one of the most popular saints, but as the Bollandists remark, few absolutely certain facts, having a historic value, are known about his life. Biographers are far from being agreed as to the dates of his birth and death. The Breviary of the Order gives his legend in a single lesson, and devotes but a few lines to the acts of his life. The Bollandists give two lives of St. Roch. One, very short, written by an anonymous writer and of very doubtful authority, the other, written in 1478, by Francis Diedo, a Venetian noble, governor of Brescia. It was published by Surius, who makes a mistake in attributing it to a Dominican from Bergamo. We have followed the life written by Francis Diedo.

[2] The anonymous life, published by the Bollandists, says that the father of St. Roch was governor of Montpellier, and descended from the Kings of France. This is confirmed by the chronicles of Aragon and Majorca.

They looked upon their subjects as children and brothers, and they gave plentiful alms to the poor. The general estimation in which they were held, and the possession of an abundance of this world's goods did not complete their happiness. They were old, and they had no children. They prayed, however, without ceasing to Heaven, less to obtain from Providence an heir to their immense fortune, than a fervent disciple of Jesus Christ. One day when Libéra was at Notre-Dame-des-Tables, making her usual prayer before the statue of the Mother of God, Jesus and Mary vouchsafed to hear her, and her prayer was granted. Transported with joy, she returned home, announced the good news to her husband, and they both knelt down and thanked God together. Before long the promise of Heaven was fulfilled, and Libéra brought forth a child, who was named Roch. On his breast a red cross was deeply marked, an unequivocal sign of his future sanctity. Libéra understood her duties as a mother, and determined to suckle and bring up this child of benediction herself. Trained in virtue by his pious parents, Roch grew both in age and grace before God and men. At five years old he punished his body to keep it under, depriving himself of all that conduced to softness, and thus prepared himself to become a docile instrument of the Holy Spirit. His childhood and boyhood were spent in the practice of piety and charity.

Roch was barely twenty when God deprived him of his father. When he was dying, the governor of Montpellier called Roch to his side and gave him his last advice. It is worthy of being compared to that which Tobias gave to his son. "Here I am," said the dying father, "on the point of leaving this troublous life, this life of trial and misery, to appear before my God. As I have nothing in the world dearer than you, and I have taken every care to form your character, I think that I ought to give you now some advice which will help you to spend your life in piety and innocence. Before all things, devote yourself to the service of

God, and meditate diligently on the sufferings of our Divine Lord. Be the stay of the widow, the orphan, and all those in misfortune. Above all keep yourself from avarice, the source of all kinds of sins. Be eyes to the blind and feet to the lame, be the father of the poor, and know that in employing the property which I leave you in works of mercy, that you will be blessed of God and men." The pious young man shed tears, and promised to attend faithfully to this advice. When he had closed the eyes of his venerated father, he buried him with all the pomp due to his rank and fortune. This last wound to his affections was hardly healed before God took from him his pious mother. Roch bore this second trial with the same resignation and the same noble sentiments as the first.

Left alone with an immense fortune at his disposal, the world was before him with all its seductions and hopes, but our Saint had been taught in the school of our Saviour, and for the things of earth he felt nothing but contempt. His heart was set on the things of Heaven, and he gave up his principality to his uncle, sold his possessions, distributed the price to the poor, and having put on a pilgrim's habit, he went to Rome on foot, to visit the Tomb of the holy Apostles. Historians believe that it was then that our Saint entered the Third Order of St. Francis. The plague was making fearful ravages at this time throughout the various provinces of Italy. When Roch arrived at Acquapendente, he went to the hospital of St. John, which was full of the plague-stricken, and offered himself to the director, named Vincent, to help him in his office of mercy. "I see," said Vincent, "that your charity and faith are not of a common kind, but your youth and delicate health will never endure the hard work and deadly exhalations of this house." "Why!" said Roch, "is it not said in the Holy Scriptures that nothing is impossible with the help of Heaven? Is it not written, 'As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to Me?'" Overcome

by these entreaties, and fearing to displease God if he deprived the sick in the hospital of such unexpected help, Vincent conducted the holy young man to the plague-stricken. St. Roch traced on the forehead of each of them the sign of the cross, and immediately they were cured. He then went all over the town and in the same manner delivered those whom he visited from this terrible malady. A sort of stupefaction took possession of everybody at first, but soon it was acknowledged that this wonderful power was the result of divine virtue. Every one blessed God, and the young stranger was venerated as an Angel sent from Heaven.

To escape the honours which surrounded him, the Saint left Acquapendente secretly. He visited Cesena and other towns of Italy, curing the plague-stricken as he went, and causing many to bless the Name of our Lord. At last he arrived at Rome. The mortality there was frightful, the inhabitants were in the greatest consternation. The servant of God signalized himself in the Eternal City by the same prodigies of devotedness and charity, and soon the terrible scourge disappeared before the power of his miracles. After having stayed at Rome a certain time and satisfied his devotion at the Tomb of the Apostles and of the holy Martyrs, Roch felt himself inspired to continue his peregrinations. He bent his steps towards the North of Italy, visited Mantua, Modena, Parma, and several other towns. Wherever he passed the sick were cured. God guided his steps to Piacenza where the plague was raging. In this town he was himself attacked by the scourge which hitherto he had commanded as a master. As soon as he arrived at Piacenza, St. Roch went to the hospital, devoted himself to the poor sick people, and, with the sign of the cross, restored them all to health. One night when he was quite worn out with fatigue and want of sleep, he threw himself on a pallet to take a little rest, and he heard a voice, which said to him, "Roch, my son, you have borne many fatigues

for My sake, journeys, cold, hunger, work of all kinds, now for love of Me, you must suffer also great pains in your body."

At the sound of this voice the Saint awoke, and felt as if he had been struck by a sword in the side. After having assisted so many sick people he was at last struck down himself, and experienced without intermission fearful sufferings. Then raising his eyes to Heaven, he cried out, "O, sweetest Jesus! I thank Thee for having vouchsafed to remember Thy servant. I offer Thee this pain and I am thankful for it as a gift from Thy Hand. It is thus that Thou dost visit a wretched creature. This visit is sweet and dear to my soul. Coming from Thee, death is a gain to me." However, his pains were so severe that he could not restrain his moans and groans, and day and night his sufferings drew from him piercing cries. Fresh sick people arrived every day at the hospital, taking the place of those whom he had cured, and being disturbed by the groans of of the servant of God they grumbled, begged him to stop his cries and to bear his sufferings with patience as others did.

We must here remark that the moanings of the Saint were no sign of a want of patience, but only an involuntary effect of his great sufferings. The outward signs of pain do not displease God, if the soul is resigned and perfectly submissive to His good pleasure. Our Lord Himself, the Divine model of the afflicted, could not restrain His tears before the grave of Lazarus. Thrice, in the Garden of Gethsemane He asked that the Chalice should pass away from Him. And again when expiring on the Cross He cried with a loud voice. The resignation and courage of the Saints was not stoicism. Not wishing to be a burthen to the other sick in the hospital, Roch resolved to go away. He summoned up his strength, rose from his pallet and went out, dragging himself painfully along with the help of his stick. When he arrived in the street, he could not take

another step but sank on the ground in an agony of pain. The passers by seeing him in this state, murmured against the director of the hospital, accusing him of inhuman conduct, and imploring him to receive the poor sick man into the hospital. The director declared that he had not turned him out, but that Roch had gone away out of extreme delicacy. The conduct of the Saint then appeared to have been prompted by insanity, and God permitted that notwithstanding all the good he had done in the town, he should be driven away from it as a madman.

With great difficulty St. Roch reached the neighbouring forest. There he fell down, worn out with fatigue, at the foot of a cornelian tree. He rested there some time, then perceiving a small ruined hut, he entered it and said to our Lord, "O, most sweet Jesus! I know how much beholden I am to Thy Majesty, inasmuch Thou hast deigned to make me endure pains so justly deserved. I have not treated the sick with all the charity which Thy love deserved from me. Have pity on my weakness, and do not forsake me. O, most good Jesus! do not leave me to perish, alone and without assistance, among the wild beasts." God, Who never forsakes those who trust in Him, heard his prayer. A gentle rain began to fall near the door of his hut and formed a little stream. Roch quenched his thirst at it, and washed his wounds, and thus alleviated for a time his racking pains.

Divine Providence employed other means, not less miraculous, to feed the Saint. He, Who took care of Elias and Paul in the desert, by sending them their daily bread by means of a crow, made use of another messenger, more intelligent and not less faithful, to bring at regular times the bread necessary for the subsistence of the solitary. Not far from his retreat there were some fine country houses, where wealthy inhabitants of the town had retired to escape from the plague. In one of these houses there lived a gentleman, named Gothard, a very rich but God-fearing

man. He had many servants in his service, and he kept a large pack of hounds. One day when Gothard was dining, one of these dogs cleverly carried off the bread he had in his hand. The gentleman was amused at the dog's impudence, setting it down as a funny trick, or to great hunger. The dog disappeared rapidly, carrying off the bread in its mouth. The next day and the day after the same thing took place. Very much astonished, Gothard determined to watch the animal. When the same thing again happened, he left the table, and inspected the road which the dog had taken. The animal, guided by the Hand of God, made his way to the forest, and put down the bread at the feet of Roch, who, in exchange, gave the dog his blessing. At the sight, Gothard greatly wondered, he approached the hut, entered with precaution, and there perceived a poor young man lying on a bed of leaves, unable to move. He began to question him, but the stranger begged him to go away that he might not catch the infection as he had got the plague. Gothard left the hut and returned in great haste to his house. However, on the road he reproached himself for his cowardice, and, touched by grace, returned on his steps, and again presenting himself to the servant of God, offered to serve him until he had recovered his health.

Roch welcomed with humble gratitude the companion whom Divine Providence had sent him. The two pious hermits lived for some time together, encouraging one another by holy conversation, and devoting themselves zealously to prayer and practices of penance. Roch hearing that the plague still raged at Piacenza, resolved to return to the help of the unfortunate town. He was not thoroughly recovered and could hardly stand, but his charitable zeal supplied ~~for~~ his want of strength. He started in the early morning, leaning on a stick, and went straight to the hospital. There, forgetting past injuries and solely desirous to return good for evil, he visited the sick and restored them to health by the sign of the cross. He then went

through the town healing all those who came to him. At sunset Roch left Piacenza and went back to the forest. Then all the wild beasts, which were also struck by the plague, came to the Saint and by their suppliant postures asked him to cure them. The Saint blessed them and they went away healed.[3]

At the sight of all these prodigies the people conceived a very high opinion of the servant of God. They came from all parts to visit the two solitaries, to beg the help of their prayers, and to be edified by the sight of their virtues. One day, however, the Saint being thoroughly cured, received a command from God to return to his own country. The good Gothard was brokenhearted on hearing of this approaching separation, but the Saint told him that it was the Will of God. He exhorted him to persevere until death in the life of prayer and penance which he had embraced, and gave him wise advice as to how to sanctify himself in his solitude. Then the two friends parted to meet again in Heaven. Gothard lived a holy life in his hermitage, and, after his death, his fellow-citizens held him in blessed memory. A picture of him, with that of his old companion, is still to be seen at Piacenza, in the church of St. Anne.

Faithful to the commands of Heaven, Roch returned to Montpellier. War was then desolating the South of France. St. Roch was so worn out with his austerities and sufferings, that when he arrived in his native town he was not recognized. Moreover he was taken for a spy disguised as a pilgrim. He was immediately arrested, questioned as to his extraction, his name, his country and the object of his journey. The Saint contented himself with answering each question by saying that he was a pilgrim and servant of Jesus Christ. This great reticence, this absolute silence as to his name and country, confirmed the

[3] Hence the habit in certain places of blessing domestic animals and flocks on the Feast of St. Roch, and of having recourse to his intercession in time of murrain.

suspicions of his judges, and by the express command of the governor he was thrown into prison. St. Roch spent five years in a horrible dungeon, at the mercy of his gaolers, who subjected him to ill-usage and the most severe privations. Yet a word from him would have sufficed to get himself acknowledged by his uncle, the governor of Montpellier, and he might have reappeared in the city surrounded with all the honour due to his noble birth. Like St. Alexis, the servant of God preferred a poor obscure and despised life to all these honours. From the depths of his dungeon, he poured forth unceasingly hymns of praise and thanksgiving, and asked, through the intercession of our Lady, for patience and constancy to the very end.

The Saint bore the horrors of his prison with unshaken constancy for five long years, constantly persevering in prayer and practices of penance. The governor and his subordinates had completely lost sight of him. When he felt that his end was near and that his painful pilgrimage was drawing to its close, he asked to see a minister of God that he might receive the Last Sacraments. The priest on entering, beheld the prison supernaturally lighted up. The countenance of the poor captive was radiant. After having given him the Last Sacraments, he hastened to inform the governor of the prodigies he had witnessed. It was soon noised abroad and the people came in crowds to the prison. When he had received the Last Sacraments, the Saint took a little sleep, and he saw in a dream, a heavenly messenger who said to him, "Roch, the time is come for you to receive the reward of your labours, and for your soul to repose in the Bosom of God; so if you wish to obtain some grace for men, ask it from the Most High before you die, your desire shall be granted." When Roch awoke, his soul was bathed in holy joy. Always forgetful of himself and solely occupied about the interests of others, he addressed this prayer to God, "I humbly beseech Thee, Lord, that whomsoever, being attacked by the plague or in danger of

being attacked thereby, shall implore my protection with faith, may be preserved from this scourge or delivered from his sickness. I venture to solicit this grace, not because of my own merits, but in the name of Thy mercy and clemency which are infinite." These words were hardly out of his mouth, when he expired, whilst raising his eyes to Heaven and lovingly pressing his crucifix to his heart. He is believed to have been thirty-two years of age.

No sooner had St. Roch expired, than his sanctity was manifested by prodigies. The prison shone with celestial light, Angels gave forth sweet melodies, his body was surrounded with rays of glory and diffused a sweet perfume. By his side was found a tablet on which an Angel had written, in letters of gold, the name of Roch, with these words added, "I announce to all those who, being attacked by the plague, even of the most terrible kind, shall have recourse to the protection of Roch, that they shall be delivered from it." This sweet and consoling promise is attested by the sacred liturgy, which says in the prayer for the Saint's Office, "O Lord, Who didst engrave on a tablet, by the hand of an Angel, the promise made to Blessed Roch of preserving from the plague whomsoever should invoke his name, vouchsafe, by his merits and by his prayers, to grant that we may be delivered from the plague both of body and soul."

As soon as the governor was informed of the prodigies which God had worked by the merits of this unknown man, he bitterly reproached himself for having so long delayed to do him justice. He nevertheless wished to ascertain for himself the truth of these prodigies and went to the prison. No sooner had he crossed the threshold than he was struck by the glory which surrounded the venerable remains. His glance fell on the celestial inscription, and he saw the name of the unknown—it was that of his nephew! With indescribable emotion and choked with sobs and tears, he threw himself upon the body of his

nephew, reproached himself with his cruelty towards him and begged his pardon for having treated him so badly.

The mother of the governor, and grandmother to St. Roch, also hastened to the prison, and uncovering the Saint's breast, saw once more the wondrous red cross with which he had been marked from his birth, and she too attested that the poor prisoner was her grandson. They gave the Saint a magnificent funeral. A church was built to receive his tomb, and God justified by miracles the devotion which the people paid to His servant.

During the Council of Constance, the plague broke out in the town. Processions and public prayers in honour of St. Roch were ordered, and immediately the scourge disappeared. Thenceforward, devotion to St. Roch became popular throughout the whole world, and in times of plague, the people experienced the effects of his power. Part of the relics of St. Roch were transferred to Arles, in 1399, and the other part to Venice, in 1485. Devotion to St. Roch has been approved by several Sovereign Pontiffs. Urban VIII. gave permission for his feast to be celebrated with a proper Office in the churches which are dedicated to him. (His feast is kept on this day throughout the Order of St. Francis.)

ANTIPHON TO ST. ROCH.

Ave, Roche sanctissime. Nobili natus sanguine, Crucis signatus schemate Sinistro tuo latere.	Hail, O most holy Roch! born of a noble family, marked in the left side with the sign of the cross.
Roche peregre profectus, Pestiferæ mortis ictus Curavisti mirifice, Tangendo salutifere.	St. Roch, in your far journeys, you healed in a marvellous way with your health-giving touch the sick who were struck with the deadly plague.
Vale, Roche angelicæ Vocis citatus flamine Obtinuisti Deifice A cunctis pestem pellere.	Hail, angelic St. Roch who, by the intervention of a heavenly messenger, obtained from God the privilege of preserving from the plague, all those who invoke you.

August 18

St. Clare of Montefalco. Virgin.

[1268—1308.]

Of the Third Order.

Montefalco, a little town in the diocese of Spoleto, in Umbria, was the native place of this Saint. At the age of six years, Clare was allowed to enter the convent of St. Illuminata, of which her sister Jane was Superior. She at once embraced the Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis which the nuns of this community followed. When she was fourteen, her community changed their residence and built a monastery on a hill close by, under the title of Holy Cross. Once installed in their new abode, the nuns begged the Bishop to give them an approved Rule, which should, however, permit them to keep the habit of the Third Order. In 1290, the Rule of St. Augustine was given to them, with the permission they had asked.[1] Jane, sister to our Saint, was canonically elected Abbess.

From her childhood, Clare gave unusual signs of great sanctity. From the moment she entered her sister's community, she kept silence most rigorously, she set to work to mortify her senses and practised diligently prayer and contemplation. Her bed was the bare ground, her food a little bread and water. She treated her body as unworthy of the least attention, as a slave of whom much should be expected

[1] *Abrégé historique de la Vie des Saints et Bienheureux des trois Ordres de Saint Francois*, par le P. Fulgence Férot, Récollet, Paris. 1779. T. I. p 303.

and on whom little should be bestowed, and she macerated it by fasts, watchings and disciplines. She passed almost the whole night without sleep that she might give herself to prayer and converse with the Angels. So holy a life merited singular favours from God, Who loves pure souls, and delights in conversing with souls smitten with love of Him. Several times in the midst of a swoon, brought on by her excessive austerities, Clare heard the sweet chants of Angels, and each time these sounds from the Heavenly country renewed her strength. Jesus Christ vouchsafed to visit her under the form of a traveller, He also appeared to her under the form of an Angel. When she was still a child, the Blessed Virgin appeared to her, carrying the Holy Child in her arms. Clare did not dare go near, but the Holy Mother encouraged her, and said, "Clare, embrace your Spouse." Clare obeyed, but the Holy Child, wishing to enkindle her heart still more and increase her desires, hid Himself under His Mother's mantle and disappeared. Her sister, one day, by way of trying her, forbade her to go to Communion, another day, having forgotten her mantle she dared not approach the grating, on both these occasions our Lord Himself gave her Communion.

Like all truly holy souls, Clare made the sufferings of her Redeemer the most frequent subjects of her meditations. She wept over them with many tears. Indeed she was allowed to see in spirit what passed on Calvary, and to feel somewhat of the sorrows of the Man God. It was to her the cause of untold suffering. To fulfil the desire of His handmaid, that she might share the bitterness of His cross, Jesus engraved in her heart the image of the different instruments of His Passion. These impressions could be seen and verified after her death. In the gall bag three little balls were found, perfectly alike, and of an equal weight, and yet one of them weighed as much as all the three together, a wonderful figure of the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, on which this great servant of God

frequently meditated, and which was deeply engraven in her mind.

On the death of her sister, in the year 1298, the nuns elected Clare as their Superior. She then redoubled her austerities and prayers. To all the sisters she was a tender mother, and she watched over them with a solicitude that was quite angelic. She would explain to them with surprising lucidity the teaching of our holy Books. She showed them the sacred way of virginity open before them, a glorious and sure way, a way strewn with crosses, no doubt, but to which is attached the ever blessed privilege of following the Lamb without spot whithersoever He goeth. Above all, she showed them how to tread this path without danger, to smooth its ruggedness, and to arrive by it at the blessed goal. The charity of the Saint reached beyond the monastery. The justice of God was appeased by her austerities, and she was enabled to convert numberless sinners, to reconcile families, to bring about peace between towns which were at war with one another. She worked many miracles during her life. At her prayer the sick were cured. Those who were possessed by the devil were delivered from their bonds. She raised from the dead one of her nuns, as well as a poor workman who had been overtaken during his work by a landslip. She foretold future events and worked a great many other prodigies.

Warned of her approaching end, St. Clare called her nuns to her side, gave them most salutary advice and recommended them to the care of her brother, Father Francis Damiani, who belonged to the Order of St. Francis. By an interior illumination she received the assurance that her sins were forgiven and that a reward was prepared for her. Then she exclaimed, "O, sweetest Jesus! how great is the happiness reserved to those who serve Thee with love! No, the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come in Heaven!" Clare slept the sleep of the just on the seventeenth of August, 1308. At this

very moment, a Friar Minor saw her soul, shining with light, enter into Heaven, amid a band of celestial spirits. After her death, many miracles were wrought at her tomb, and the Church was not long in placing her on the Altars. She was solemnly canonized by Leo XIII., on the eighth of December, 1881. (Her feast is kept by the Conventuals and by the Capuchins.)

St. Clare of Montefalco had a very special devotion to the great mysteries of the Sorrowful Passion. One day our Lord appeared to her, carrying His Cross, and said to her, "I have been searching a long time, my daughter, to find a firm and solid spot on which to plant My Cross, and I have not found one more suitable than in your heart. You must then receive it and allow it to take root." And at once this holy lover of our Lord opened her heart to receive the sign of salvation. Let us beseech our Divine Saviour to engrave in our minds and in our hearts the remembrance of His holy Passion. This remembrance will be an everflowing source of grace to us.

August 19.

St. Louis of Anjou, Bishop of Toulouse and Pamiers.

[1274—1297.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

St. Louis of Anjou, one of the glories of the French Church and of the Seraphic Order, was a perfect example of the youthful Christian, of religious life, and of a pastor of souls. Born on the steps of a throne, he knew pomp and grandeur only to despise them. Taken away from this earth in the spring time of life, he was a true mirror of charity and innocence and purity. The Church in her liturgy addresses to him the beautiful prayer, "O vernal Rose of Charity, Lily of Purity, shining Star, Vessel of Sanctity, Blessed Louis, pray for us."

This young prince was born at the castle of Brignoles, in Provence, in the month of February in the year 1274. His father was Charles II., Count of Anjou and Provence, King of Naples and Jerusalem, his mother was Mary, daughter of Stephen V., King of Hungary. At his baptism he received the name of Louis in memory of his great-uncle the King St. Louis. St. Louis of Anjou numbered a great many Saints in his family. On his father's side, St. Louis King of France, Blessed Isabella and St. Ferdinand King of Castile; on his mother's side, he claimed kindred with St. Hedwiga Duchess of Silesia, St. Elisabeth of Hungary, St. Elisabeth of Portugal, and Blessed Agnes of Bohemia, Blessed Cunegonde, Blessed Yolande, Blessed Margaret of Hungary, and Blessed Salome. United by the ties of blood

to the greatest saints of this memorable period, St. Louis of Anjou was himself destined to be a bright light in the Church.

From his most tender years Louis was favoured with special graces. There was nothing that was puerile in his tastes, his heart was disposed to love virtue before he began to walk in her paths, and his mind, just opening to the first dawnings of intelligence, was already illuminated by the rays of grace. These most happy dispositions were seconded by his pious mother. Mary of Hungary was worthy of her aunt the great St. Elisabeth, she had at heart before all things the spiritual welfare of her many children, she desired to make them faithful servants of the King of kings. With diligent solicitude she accustomed them to prayer, to the avoidance of the slightest faults, to the practice of virtue. She took them to church herself, and taught them to behave with great respect there, to occupy themselves in devotion, and to pray fervently for the blessing of the Most High. With a heart open to the pious lessons of his mother, and receiving all her instructions with docility and respect, Louis already diffused around him the sweet odour of Jesus, by his ineffable mildness, his charming modesty and his angelic purity. He was eager to visit churches and monasteries, anxious about the miseries and sufferings of the poor, careless of himself, and austere in the midst of the pleasures of the court. When scarcely seven years old, he practised penitential exercises, and, according to his mother's testimony, he was frequently discovered lying on the carpet which covered the stone floor of his room, instead of taking his rest in his bed.

Penetrated with the tenderest feelings of compassion for the suffering members of Jesus Christ, little Louis neglected no chance of relieving them, and he showed them a charity which God was pleased to reward by miracles. He sometimes managed to abstract provisions from the pantry or the dining room, and to hide them under his clothes in

order to distribute them among his beloved poor. Now one day when he was thus carrying off a chicken, destined for the royal table, he met his father, who had already been informed of his pious larcenies by the major domo. The king insisted on seeing what Louis had, hidden under his garments, and the child, opening his mantle, had nothing but a nosegay of beautiful flowers to present to his father's investigation. Great was the king's astonishment, for it was midwinter. The flowers then resumed their original form, and the young Saint was enabled to complete his work of charity. From that day his father committed to his care abundant alms for the poor.

Very early in life, the soul of Louis was to be tried by adversity. At the age of fourteen, he and two of the princes his brothers were sent to Barcelona, to remain there as hostages for the king their father. Their captivity lasted for seven years.

The first sentiment which piety inspired in our Saint, was that of blind submission to the ever adorable will of Providence. However grievous the sacrifice of his liberty might have been, he accepted it with humility, with joy and love. He sincerely loved Jesus, and he desired to love Him yet more under trials than in prosperity. His soul lost nothing of its calm, his face nothing of that sweet peace which was imprinted on it, he was ever the pattern and consoler of his brothers and his other companions in captivity. To a nobleman who expressed his astonishment at the serenity of the Saint's soul in the midst of such sharp trials, he replied, that misfortune was much more advantageous than happiness to the friends of God, because it put their faithfulness to the proof. Only once did he pray to God to break his chains, and then he prayed on the condition "If that helps to my salvation." During their captivity, the three young princes were confided by the king their father, to the direction of the Friars Minor. Under such masters, the young Louis in his seven years' exile, made wonderful

progress in all knowledge, Divine and human, and above all things, in holiness.

A considerable part of his day was consecrated to pious exercises. Though he was a layman, says the contemporary biographer, he said the Divine Office with the religious both day and night, to the Hours of the Breviary he added the Penitential Psalms, the *Salve Regina* and other prayers in honour of the Mother of God, for whom he had from his childhood a tender devotion. He had such veneration for the Name of Jesus, that he never heard it pronounced without feeling the utmost joy in his heart, and without showing his respect by bowing his head. During the recitation of the Divine Office, and of the other prayers said in common, he severely reproved anyone who went on too fast, or who disturbed those holy exercises in any way whatever. As he was older than his brothers, he made use of his authority to make the service of God pleasant in their eyes, and to lead them in the path of virtue. Louis gave up long hours to prayer. Frequently, says his biographer, when he was called to supper, did he prolong his devotions. At night, as soon as the servants had retired and he thought his brothers were asleep, he would rise and would remain in prayer till the hour of Matins. The spirit of darkness attempted by means of frightful apparitions to make the youthful Saint turn aside from his pious exercises. One night by the light of a lamp which was burning in the room, his two brothers witnessed one of these attacks of the devil, they saw an enormous black cat which repeatedly sprang at our Saint, who however put it to flight by the sign of the cross. After the disappearance of the enemy, Louis went up to his brothers' bed, and he made them promise that they would never reveal what they had witnessed as long as he lived. They faithfully kept their word, and never spoke of the strange scene till after the Saint's death.

His biographers tell us of his tender devotion to the

Blessed Eucharist, of his exactitude in attending Holy Mass every day, after having prepared himself for it by confession. When he became a priest he also confessed every day before he ascended the steps of the altar, and he was never known to omit the celebration of the holy Mysteries, even while on the longest and most fatiguing journeys. He was extremely devout to the mysteries of our Saviour's Sacred Passion, and with much respect he always carried with him a morsel of the true Cross, together with the relics of several saints. Fervent Christians of this time sometimes wore, through devotion, the cross that was given to the soldiers of the Holy Land, our Saint also wore on his garments this distinctive mark of the Crusaders, and he preserved it till he put on the habit of St. Francis.

From his earliest years, Louis had shown the most tender compassion for the suffering members of Jesus Christ, his charity did but increase during his captivity. He opened wide both heart and hands to the poor, and poured out in a stream all the help and all the consolation in his power, on poverty, helplessness and grief. On Holy Thursday and on some other occasions, he invited a certain number of poor persons, waited on them himself, and served them with the most touching care. After the example of his glorious ancestors, King St. Louis and St. Elisabeth, our Saint had always a great affection for lepers, for those touching images of the Redeemer covered with the leprosy of our sins. He delighted to visit them in their homes, and to render them the lowliest services. With his beautiful hands "white as ivory," says his biographer, the young prince washed their limbs, dressed their ulcers and piously kissed them. One Holy Thursday, as he was going to visit the Templars' church, he met a poor leper, he would willingly have embraced him, but he refrained, for fear of wounding the delicacy of his brother, Prince Robert. Next day, Good Friday, he again met the same leper, and the remembrance of our Saviour, bruised and wounded for love of us, forbade

any further hesitation or timidity on account of others, he called the leper to him and embraced him. Prince Robert was stupefied for a moment, then, electrified by so heroic an example, he in his turn folded in his arms the poor creature, who till then had been an object of horror to him.

Our Lord had inspired in the youthful Saint a special love for the angelic virtue, and he neglected no means of preserving in all its freshness the lovely lily of innocence. To fervent and assiduous prayer, he added all the practices of penance, fasts, macerations, bloody disciplines. Yet all these measures might have been insufficient if he had not practised that vigilance so much recommended by our Lord. Throughout his life he showed extreme modesty in word and look, he used the greatest reserve in all his dealings, and he never spoke to persons of the other sex except of necessity and in the presence of a witness. His bearing, his conversation, everything about him was angelic, he would not suffer a word to be pronounced before him that could suggest the slightest impropriety. A nobleman having dared to advise him to commit a bad action, the young prince rejected his proposition with horror, "What!" he exclaimed, "is it not enough that my body is kept in hard captivity? Would you put my soul into irons too? . . . . If my limbs are chained, at least let my heart be free. God keep me from casting myself, body and soul into hell." The biographers of our Saint relate other anecdotes, which reveal his angelic modesty and the great delicacy of his soul. Towards the end of his captivity, his sister Blanche, who was to be married to the King of Aragon, came to Barcelona to visit the princes her brothers. Louis observed such strict modesty during this visit, that in spite of her entreaties, the princess could not obtain even one look from him. As they were returning to their country, the three princes met their pious mother at Florence, she was accompanied by her eldest son Charles Martel and a numerous suite. On seeing her children after so long an absence, the queen

threw herself into their arms, and pressed them to her heart, but Louis turned his face away from the face of his mother. In vain she reminded him that she was his mother, and that a mother's tenderness cannot be displeasing to God. The young prince modestly replied, "I know that you are my mother, but I know also that you are a woman, and a servant of God is not allowed to take such a liberty with any woman." Louis never departed from this extreme reserve. While he was Bishop of Toulouse, the Queen of France, his cousin, who was travelling in the South of France, begged him to come to meet her, but, however religious the affection which Jane of Navarre bore for him, our Saint thought he ought not to yield to her wishes.

We must not wonder at this seemingly strange behaviour of the Saint. Louis had been given to the world as a stainless mirror of purity and innocence. Moreover it was God's will to show by miracles, in what degree purity was, as it were, the spiritual physiognomy of His young servant. Scarcely had he breathed his last sigh, when a rose of marvellous beauty appeared, growing out of his mouth, and a holy religious saw his soul ascending towards Heaven, accompanied by a multiutde of celestial spirits singing "Thus are those honoured who have served God in innocence and purity." Again, it is in testimony of our Saint's angelic innocence that multitudes of children have been restored to life at his intercession.

Wadding mentions a singular marvel by which it seems to have been God's will to glorify the virginal purity of His servant, this marvel was renewed every year in a chapel erected in his honour in the diocese of Orviedo in Spain. On the nineteenth of August, the Feast of St. Louis, people thronged thither from all the neighbouring towns, and during the celebration of the holy Mysteries, azure lilies appeared in bloom all round the Altar; at the same time the walls of the chapel were covered with these miraculous flowers, which the faithful hastened to gather in order to make use of them

to heal divers maladies. As soon as Holy Mass was ended these flowers at once faded.[1] These wonderful facts justify the graceful titles that the Church grants to our Saint, when she calls him Vernal Rose of Charity, Lily of Virginity, Shining Star, Vessel of Sanctity. Virginal purity, charity towards God and man, assiduity in prayer, such were the lovely flowers which the young Saint cultivated in the garden of his soul during the seven years of his captivity. But attentive as he was to his pious exercises, Louis did not neglect the cultivation of his mind, he applied himself to study in earnest, under the direction of the able masters whom the king his father had given him. He had as governor or tutor William of Manerie, to whose care he had been entrusted ever since he was seven years old, a knight who was as remarkable for his bravery as for his rare piety. Several Friars Minor, chosen from among the holiest and the most learned of them, were his instructors in knowledge and virtue, his biographers mention among others, Pontius Carbonelli, Richard of Media Villa, Fortis, William of Falga, Father Francis Brun, of Apt, who was his spiritual director, and Father Francis Scarrero and Father Peter, who were afterwards raised to the episcopate. Louis had also as a master James of Ossa or Euse, a native of Cahors, who, as Pope John XXII., had the great joy of canonizing his royal pupil. The studies of our Saint included secular knowledge, philosophy, theology, the Sacred Scriptures and everything necessary for the education of a prince. Endowed with a very high degree of intelligence, Louis made very rapid progress indeed under such masters, in all branches of knowledge, both sacred and profane. At Barcelona he

[1] This marvellous occurrence, related by Wadding and confirmed by Giles Gonsalvo, has been renewed from time to time in the presence of multitudes; its authenticity has been acknowledged by competent persons, particularly by Gregory XIII. and Father Francis de Sosa, Bishop of the Canary Isles and sometime General of the Order. (*Giles Gonsalvo, Ecclesiastical Theatre of Spain.*)

maintained the most difficult theses against doctors who were initiated in all the secrets of ecclesiastical science. He acquired great eloquence, and his preaching was the admiration of men well versed in the arts of oratory, above all it brought forth abundant fruits of salvation and sanctification in the souls of his hearers.

God, Who tries His servants as gold is tried in the furnace, now ordained that a serious illness should be added to the trials of exile and captivity. Louis was attacked by pulmonary phthisis. The malady made such rapid and fearful strides that, in the opinion of men of science, no human remedy had power to arrest it. On the vigil of the Purification the symptoms became more alarming, the patient had a terrible attack and seemed on the point of being suffocated. When the crisis was passed, Louis prayed to be delivered from his sickness, and made a vow to our Lord, under the auspices of the Blessed Virgin and St. Francis, that he would enter the Order of Friars Minor, and to this promise he added the vow of perpetual chastity. From that day his strength began to return, and his health was very soon perfectly re-established. He desired to put his promise into execution immediately, but as the Friars Minor did not dare to receive him at once, he publicly renewed his vow on the Feast of Pentecost, before an altar dedicated to the Queen of Virgins. Thus committing his desire to Mary, he patiently waited till Providence should offer him the means of obeying the inspiration of God. During the latter part of their captivity, the young princes were allowed to exercise themselves in horsemanship, fencing and the like. This kind of recreation delighted Prince Robert, the future King of Naples, and to please his brother our young Saint took his part also in these exercises. One day, it came to pass that his horse was frightened at something, it reared, fell backwards on its rider and rolled over him three times, those who witnessed the accident thought the prince must be killed. To their astonishment they saw

him rise up without the slightest hurt. They all praised and thanked God Who had preserved him. For the prince himself, this accident was a warning from Heaven, he resolved never again to mount a horse or to bear arms, a resolution which he never failed to keep. When he became bishop, he made use of a mule during his journeys.

Louis never lost sight of the vow he had made to enter the Order of Friars Minor. He was firmly resolved to forsake the world altogether in order to give himself solely to God. But many difficulties presented themselves to his mind in utter opposition to his design. He laid them before Father Francis Brun, his confessor, and said, "I have made a vow of perpetual chastity, and I have made a vow to enter your Order. My engagements towards God are irrevocable. Nevertheless I feel the most trying uncertainty. Is it to be here in the midst of my family that I am to fulfil my promise, or ought I to go into a foreign country? If I dwell here near my family, it will be almost impossible for me to practise humility according to my desire, I am afraid that my brothers will surround me with excessive honours. Therefore I am thinking whether I cannot withdraw to Germany or some other far country, where, unknown to everybody, I shall not be prevented from washing the plates and dishes, cooking, sweeping out the house and fulfilling all the meanest offices. This is what I want to do with all my heart, for I know that the more a man humbles himself for the love of God the dearer he is to God." His pious director praised the sweetness and candour which prompted the young prince, but he dissuaded him from this project, pointing out to him that it would be impossible for him to avoid discovery by his father, and that, on the other hand, the public dedication of himself to humility and poverty would tend to the greater glory of God and the greater edification of souls.

Being unable during his captivity to put his design into immediate execution, our Saint desired to be at least enrolled in the army of the clergy, he petitioned the Pope

St. Celestine to this effect, and received from him a Brief which authorized him, by a very special privilege, to receive the tonsure and minor Orders, to be conferred on him by Father Francis Brun, his confessor. By another Bull dated the same day, the Pope appointed him to the Archbishopric of Lyons,[2] but this Bull was not put into execution by Boniface VIII., who ascended the Pontifical throne very shortly afterwards. Louis did more than anyone else towards the annulling of his nomination. He received the tonsure and minor Orders towards the end of his captivity, he had just completed his twentieth year.

In consequence of the treaty of Oleron, peace was re-established between the Kings of Naples and Aragon, and the three princes with their companions in captivity left Barcelona, and travelled through the South of France on their way to Italy. At Montpellier, our Saint solicited admission into the Province of the Friars Minor (of Provence), but the Superiors did not judge it prudent to admit him without the consent of his father. The young prince solemnly renewed his double vow of perpetual chastity and of entering religious life in the Order of St. Francis. At Florence, the three princes found their mother, Queen Mary, who had come to meet them, accompanied by her eldest son, Charles Martel, King of Hungary. They spent twenty days in this city where they were received with the greatest honours.

But a formidable trial was preparing for the young servant of God. His eldest brother Charles Martel died in the course of the year 1295, leaving the crown of Hungary to his son Carobert. In the judgment of Charles II., King of Naples, his second son Louis was destined to succeed him in the government of the kingdom of Naples and of the states of Anjou and Provence. Charles hoped that this son would be the support and glory of his illustrious house. Already there was a project of marriage between him and

[2] St. Celestine's Bull is dated the year 1294.

the sister of the young King of Aragon, who on his part had married Princess Blanche, our Saint's sister. This double marriage was to cement a lasting peace between the courts of Naples and Aragon. Things being thus arranged beforehand, according to the lights of human policy, it is easy to conceive how many assaults the young prince had to sustain, how many temptations were offered, how many influences were brought into play by his father to decide him to do what was expected of him. Charles II. went so far as to promise his son his immediate accession to the throne, if he would consent to the illustrious alliance proposed to him. But our Saint was immovable, he came forth victorious from every attack, and he ended by obtaining the investiture of his younger brother Robert in his rights of primogeniture. This arrangement was the triumph of God's designs on him, a triumph procured by his correspondence with grace. Our Lord had at last become his lot and his inheritance, he might now abandon himself to his joy and let the tide of gratitude overflow and inundate his heart.

After leaving Florence, and before going to Naples, Louis stayed in Rome with his father. He was as yet but in minor Orders, and he esteemed it a great honour to be allowed to perform the functions appertaining to them. On Christmas night he was to be seen among the young clerics who served at the altar, fulfilling with angelic devotion the duties of an acolyte. It is most likely that he received the subdiaconate during this stay that he made in Rome. Father Peter Calo, a contemporary writer, tells us that after he was ordained subdeacon, Louis would never again make use of vessels of silver or gold, nor of valuable furs or the like, and he redoubled the macerations with which he chastised his innocent flesh.

Soon after his return to Naples, he was ordained deacon, and then priest, in the church which the Friars Minor possessed in that city under the title of St. Laurence. The

Sovereign Pontiff himself offered to confer the priesthood on him, but our Saint humbly declined this honour. Some time before being ordained priest, he withdrew to a convent of the Friars Minor, in the suburbs of Naples, and there, in recollection and prayer, he prepared himself to become a worthy minister of the Altar. At the ceremony of his ordination, he would not allow that any particular honours should be rendered to him as the son of a sovereign. Humility appeared to him to be the first disposition required for the soul to receive the Sacrament of Ordination, by which God condescends to lower Himself to His own creature, in order to raise him to the sublimest of dignities. During the ceremony, his piety excited the admiration of all who were present. Wholly absorbed in the contemplation of the marvel which was being accomplished in his own person, he shewed the deepest emotion, and torrents of tears flowed from his eyes.

In order to render thanks to God for the favour of admittance into the priesthood, Louis withdrew, for some little time, in company with several Friars Minor, to a castle in the neighbourhood of Naples. In this retreat he divided his time between exercises of piety and the study of the Holy Scriptures, he never left off meditating on the Sacred Scriptures, except for the purpose of reading the works of the Fathers of the Church. St. Bernard had an especial charm for him, he never tired of reading and admiring his book *On Consideration*, and he habitually carried a copy of it with him. Thus the life that Louis led was one of prayer and study, nevertheless his apostle's heart inclined him to sow broadcast the seed of the Word of God, in order to increase in all souls the knowledge and the love of our Divine Master. He frequently came forth from his retreat to exercise the ministry of the Gospel. His words, which came straight from his pure heart to his pure lips, moved souls in their uttermost depths, and everywhere produced abundant fruits of salvation.

St. Louis left his solitude towards the end of the year 1295, to accompany his father for the second time in a journey to Rome. Boniface VIII. admired and appreciated the grave humble priest, who was dead to the world in the brilliance of his youth, and in the midst of the seductions of a court. His Holiness believed he was doing good service to the Church in raising him to the highest dignities regardless of his youth. At first he made him his chaplain, soon afterwards the see of Toulouse became vacant by the death of Hugh Mascaron, and the Pontiff appointed Louis to the government of that illustrious see, with an express command that he should accept the post.

Louis dared not resist the formal will of the Head of the Church, he only requested that he might first be permitted to fulfil his vow of embracing the Order of St. Francis. Boniface willingly acceded to this pious desire, and on Christmas Eve, after a fresh renunciation of all his rights of primogeniture on the kingdom of Naples, the young prince made profession of the Rule of the Friars Minor, and received the habit from the hands of Father John of Muro, Minister General of the Order. He promised to keep the Rule in the midst of the labours of the episcopa ministry, as it was kept by so many eminent prelates who had issued from the same Order. This touching ceremony took place in the church belonging to the convent of the *Ara Cæli*, where the Minister General of the great Franciscan Family resides. The dearest wish of our Saint was at last realized, his sacrifice was consummated, the poorest Order in the Church had received him into its bosom, he had exchanged the royal purple for the coarse gown of St. Francis, a perishable kingdom for an eternal kingdom. Henceforth he could repeat to himself in all truth that word which was familiar to him, "Jesus Christ is all my riches," *Divitiæ meæ Christus.*

On the thirtieth of December, some days after his entrance into the Order, St. Louis received episcopal consecration

from the hands of Pope Boniface VIII. In the Bull of preconization published on the twenty-seventh of December, the Pope recalls the illustrious birth of the Bishop Elect and the glory of his ancestors. He praises his rare knowledge of letters, etc., the innocence of his life, the gravity of his manners, the remarkable maturity of his mind and all the virtues with which the Most High has enriched his soul. The Sovereign Pontiff declares that he accepts these eminent qualities in compensation for the want of age in Louis, and he grants the necessary dispensation by virtue of his apostolic authority.

In consideration for the feelings of the king his father, our Saint had permission from the Pope, to wear the ecclesiastical dress over his religious habit. The young prelate availed himself of this privilege for some little time, but on the sixth of February, the Feast of St. Agatha, he yielded to an inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and hearkening only to his love for Jesus Who made Himself poor that we might become rich, he stripped himself of his ecclesiastical dress, and never again did he wear any other garb than the coarse habit of St. Francis. Barefoot and clothed in the Franciscan livery he walked through Rome, and went from the *Ara Cœli* to the basilica of St. Peter in company with the two Franciscan Cardinals, Matthew of Aqua-Sparta and James of Anagni. Some days afterwards, the Romans looked with emotion at the illustrious descendant of the Royal families of France, Naples and Hungary, who was going through the streets of Rome, his beggar's wallet on his shoulders, in order to perform the precepts of the Rule he had just embraced.

One day the king his father met him in Rome while he was engaged in this act of humility. "Go," he said to an officer of his suite, "Go and ask him from me, if he thinks he has done honour to the kingdoms of France and Naples in exchanging his royal robes for a beggar's wallet." Louis opened his wallet and said to the officer with a most gracious

smile, "Your reproof is quite unjust, see for yourself." Great was the surprise of his interlocutor at the marvel which presented itself to his view, the pieces of bread collected by Louis were changed into ingots of gold which sparkled like stars. The courtier threw himself at the Saint's feet, begged pardon for the hardness of his message, and vowed that he would enter the Order of Friars Minor, if his wife would give her consent to his doing so. Overwhelmed with joy at the sight of this miracle, Charles II. never again thought of opposing the generous humility of his son.

After a short sojourn in the Eternal City, the new prelate determined to go to his diocese, in order to take his shepherd's crook in his own hand, and himself lead the flock entrusted to his care. He besought the Sovereign Pontiff for his blessing, tore himself away from the embraces of his father and the other members of his family, and started on his journey. He was accompanied by several Friars Minor, who were to reside in his palace and form a regular community near his person, so as to procure him the advantages of the Franciscan Religious life. During all his journeys Louis chose to lodge in convents of his Order, indeed, he often went out of his way in order to visit them and fulfil in them the meanest offices as if he were the least of the religious among them. Willingly indeed did he forget his titles of Bishop and Prince to remember nothing but the humiliations of our Blessed Saviour.

In passing through Tuscany St. Louis stopped at Florence, where the notables of the city and the whole population received him with great honour, but he insisted on lodging with his brethren at the convent of Santa Croce. The religious conducted him to a chamber which they had done their best to ornament as befitting the dignity of so illustrious a guest. They had placed in it a gilt bedstead and rich hangings embroidered with the arms of France and Sicily. Much displeased with this luxurious accommodation, the holy Prelate refused to occupy the room, and said,

"This is by no means fit for the cell of a Friar Minor, but it is the habitation of a prince of this world." And he declared that if they would not grant him a hospitality conformable to the Rule he professed, he would go elsewhere to seek a lodging more fitting for a poor son of St. Francis. To meet the prince's desires, the religious took away every article of luxury, and left nothing but the bed in the room, but our Saint was still dissatisfied, so he spread his mantle on the floor and there he took his rest for the night. In memory of so rare an example of humility, this cell was afterwards transformed into an oratory.

When the young bishop made his entry into Toulouse, the entire city, moved by the marvellous accounts of his virtues, came out to meet him and received him as if he were an ambassador from Heaven. All were enchanted with the holy expression of his face, with his modesty, sweetness and angelic beauty. He was an inexhaustible theme for enthusiastic praise. The passage of the streets and squares was obstructed by the crowds who seemed never tired of seeing and admiring the Elect of the Lord. They followed closely in his footsteps, they went round through bye streets so as to meet him again and gaze on him afresh. His mere aspect sufficed to convert a sinner who during long years had been grovelling in the most criminal habits. By the grace of his chaste demeanour, the serenity of his virginal brow, the sympathetic and candid beauty of his countenance, the young bishop inspired this sinner with bitter repentance for his faults. Moved to the very depths of his heart this poor man exclaimed, "Our Bishop is a Saint." Louis most fully justified the hopes expressed in this enthusiastic welcome. A light placed in the candlestick of the House of God, he illuminated it with a bright light. A perfect pattern for the sheep as well as the shepherds, for men of the world as well as for the ministers of the sanctuary, he traced out for everyone, without distinction, the line of duty in all its forms.

In addition to the charge of the vast diocese of Toulouse, he was very soon to take up that of the new diocese of Pamiers. Such was the will of Boniface VIII. Louis displayed the greatest activity and solicitude in the accomplishment of his pastoral charge, the responsibility of which he so well understood. His first care was to make sure that he had worthy fellow-workers in the priests of his diocese. Convinced of his own inability and inexperience, he surrounded himself with learned and prudent religious whom he consulted in all the difficulties of his episcopal ministry. He took the wisest measures with regard to the education and reform of the clergy. He himself examined, and without respect of persons, all who presented themselves to receive Holy Orders, and never did he open the gates of the sanctuary to those in whom an irreproachable life was not united to the requisite knowledge and learning. Three weeks before his death he had to examine a clerk who had obtained a benefice in his diocese, and although the candidate protested that he had been examined in the Court of Rome, Louis declared him unworthy, as not possessing sufficient knowledge. The holy bishop prohibited any sort of luxuriousness in the dress of his clergy as well as everything that was contrary to ecclesiastical discipline. And indeed he showed himself in every detail of his conduct the perfect pattern for his priests and also for the faithful of his diocese.

At the outset of his episcopate he had an exact statement drawn up of the revenues of his bishopric, which was one of the richest in France, he reserved a fourth part for the maintenance of his household, the rest was devoted to the wants of the poor and to the keeping up of the churches. As for himself, as regards dress, he was content to wear the coarse garb of a Friar Minor. Simple sandals served for his shoes, and these he often put off in order to go barefoot, his bed, chairs, tables, all the furniture of his house breathed forth the spirit of evangelical poverty. We may add, that when he entered the Order of St. Francis he gave back to

his father all his gold and silver vessels, that for the future he might always be served with dishes of wood or earthen ware. Once, says his biographer, his barber wanted to make use of a silver basin, this luxury displeased the Saint, and he sent for a wooden bowl used for measuring out oats for the horses.

During his captivity at Barcelona, Louis had given proofs of the tenderest charity for the poor and for lepers. Now that he was a prelate, he loved with a still greater love those whom he regarded as the privileged ones of our Lord and the best beloved of his flock, he visited them in the hospitals and in their own homes, he received them at his own table, waited on them with humility, washed their feet and provided for all their wants.

Our Saint's humility thus shone with a more vivid brightness now that he was in a higher position in the House of God. It was this virtue, as well as the charity with which his heart was filled, which prompted him to make himself the servant of the poor. Mark of Lisbon relates the following anecdote, "One day when he was assisting at a solemn High Mass, the minister who offered the kiss of peace, omitted to give it to a poor leper, at the sight of this neglect the pious Bishop rose, drew near the leper and embraced him, after having knelt down before him." On another occasion, the Saint was passing by a wretched cabin, he perceived a poor old woman who was sick, she begged for someone to hear her confession, some religious who were with him wished to go to her, but this the Saint would not allow, he himself confessed the poor woman, consoled her and gave her a good alms. As he came out of the miserable hovel, it was remarked that his habit was covered with vermin. The Bishop smiled, and said, "These are the pearls of the poor."

St. Louis took pleasure in serving the Mass of the religious who was his usual companion, and he fulfilled this pious office with the greatest fervour. As he well knew that cor-

rection and blame are as wholesome for the soul, as flattery is pernicious to it, he gave charge to one of the religious who lived with him, to watch over his entire conduct, and freely to warn him of his smallest faults. And one day it happened that this charitable monitor thought it his duty publicly to reprove the Saint. The persons present at the time showed that they were offended that the religious should dare thus to reprimand the prelate, but Louis took up his corrector's defence and said, "It is for my greater good, moreover it is as I have commanded."

Whilst the faithful in his diocese were praising and blessing God for the knowledge and virtue with which He had adorned their prelate, Louis was entreating the Pope to deliver him from a charge which in his humility filled him with fear. But Boniface VIII. appreciated all the merits of the saintly young bishop, and refused to accede to his wishes. For Louis himself, his greatest happiness would have been to bury himself in the obscurity of the cloister. One day when he was visiting the Franciscan convent at Toulouse he let this cry of his heart escape from him, "Oh! when shall I be delivered from the burden of the episcopate? when shall I be at liberty to occupy a cell here as a simple friar?" A religious of this community once said to him, "My lord, in entering our Order, you have singularly honoured it." "Beware of speaking thus, Father," replied the humble prelate in accents of grieved impatience, "say rather that the Order has greatly honoured me in giving me its holy habit."

During a sojourn which he made at the great convent of the Franciscans in Paris, Louis insisted that, without taking into account his episcopal dignity, he should be assigned his office like all the other religious, and so it happened that he joined the Fathers, masters in theology, in washing the plates and dishes after the repasts, as was their custom.

Among the important duties of a bishop, the dispensing of the Word of God holds the first place. In his episcopal

city, and in the various churches of his diocese, during his pastoral visitations, Louis preached very frequently indeed. He loved to give missions in his diocese, and the concourse of his hearers was such, that several times some of them were all but suffocated. His words, full of faith and charity, brought light and love with them. At his voice heretics opened their eyes to the truth, Jews embraced the Gospel and sinners betook themselves to the ways of virtue. Our Lord often condescended to confirm the truth and virtue of the Saint's powerful preaching by miracles. In his zeal for the salvation of souls, Louis was not content with declaring the Word of God in his own diocese, he was to be heard also at Paris, in the presence of the doctors and students of the University, at Montpellier also and in several other cities of France.

It appears as if God willed that the world should have but a glimpse, as it were, of this heroic prelate. At an age when so many others scarcely begin to recognize the serious obligations of the sacerdotal state, Louis had brilliantly passed through the whole career, and already he was to go to his reward. He was twenty-three and a half years old, he was in the second year of his episcopate, when God called him to Himself.

But if he had lived but for a short time in the eyes of the world, he had, according to the word of the wise man, fulfilled in God's sight the course of a long life. On his return from a journey into Catalonia, which he had made in order to pay a visit to his sister Blanche, Queen of Aragon, our Saint came back to Toulouse, from Toulouse he went to Tarascon in order to preach the panegyric of St. Martha on July the twenty-ninth. He had the intention of pursuing his way to Rome to beg once again to be delivered from the charge of the bishopric. On the third of August he reached Brignoles. The King of Naples, who happened to be there at the time, was so much struck with the delicacy of his beloved son's health, that he desired to keep

him near him. Our Saint, out of consideration for his father, agreed to dwell in the castle of Brignoles, the place wherein he had first seen the light. On the morrow, August the fourth, he celebrated Holy Mass with the fervour of a seraph in the royal chapel. That very day, Louis was seized with a violent fever, and God revealed to him his approaching end. From that moment he ceased from every occupation but prayer, and he begged the priests who were assisting him, to address pious exhortations to him without ceasing. Every day he had Mass said in his room. Finally he received all the Last Sacraments on the Feast of the Assumption, and on the nineteenth of August he fell asleep in the Lord, with the sweet name of Mary on his lips.

The miracles worked by the intercession of St. Louis are innumerable. He has raised a multitude of little children from death, he has cured the halt, the blind, the deaf and the dumb, in a word he has been the friend of every kind of unhappiness and misery. St. Louis has often appeared to those who have invoked him in the hour of danger. His cousin St. Elisabeth of Portugal used often to speak of his miracles in the presence of her husband King Denis, who never would believe in them. And it came to pass that one day when this prince was out hunting, a bear rushed at him, cast him from his horse, and was about to tear him to pieces, in this extremity the prince invoked the Bishop of Toulouse, the Saint immediately appeared to him, clothed in the religious habit with his mitre on his head. This miraculous intervention delivered Denis from certain death. In our own days St. Louis still exercises his wonder working powers. We will content ourselves with relating one single fact. At Carpineto near Agnani there lived, in the year 1767, the noble family of Pecci. The pious couple Charles Pecci and Anna Maria Jacovani his wife had no children, and their illustrious house was threatened with extinction. The noble lady told her grief to Father Raymund of Rome, a Franciscan of the Observance, who

afterwards died in the odour of sanctity. This religious advised her to have recourse to the mediation of the angelic St. Louis of Anjou, to make a novena in his honour, and moreover to promise to give his name to the child that his prayers were to obtain, and also to celebrate his feast every year with all her family. The pious lady eagerly followed the counsels of Father Raymund, and in reward for her faith she had a son who was called Louis. This child became the happy father of His Holiness Pope Leo XIII. So we see that devotion to our Order is a family tradition for the Pontiff now gloriously reigning, a sacred heritage and a debt of gratitude. In memory of this benefit, obtained by the mediation of St. Louis, the Pecci family chose the Bishop of Toulouse for their patron, and they celebrate his feast every year with great solemnity.

The body of St. Louis was buried in the church of the Friars Minor at Marseilles, as he had himself commanded in his will. In 1423, Alphonso V. King of Aragon, being at war with Louis III. Duke of Anjou, on account of the Neapolitan kingdom, made himself master of the city of Marseilles, he prohibited under very severe penalties all pillage and violence. The relics of St. Louis formed the sole booty coveted by royal piety, therefore he carried them off to Spain and deposited them in the cathedral of Valencia where to this day they are venerated by all the faithful. When the Saint's body was removed from Marseilles one of the arms escaped the notice of Alphonso V., and the Friars Minor of that city remained in possession of this relic. The convent was destroyed in 1514, and the relic was transferred to the church of the Friars Minor of the Observance, together with a chasuble of the Saint and two of his dalmatics. The Kings of Aragon attached the very highest value to the possession of the relics of St. Louis. Louis XI. king of France having commanded on his deathbed that Roussillon and Cerdagne should be restored to the Aragonese monarchy, his son Charles VIII.

offered those provinces to Ferdinand the Catholic on condition that the relics of St. Louis should be given back to France. Ferdinand refused, he preferred to run the risk of losing two fine provinces rather than deprive his people of so precious a treasure.

St. Louis of Anjou was solemnly canonized on the seventh of April 1317, during the life-time of his pious mother, by Pope John XXII. who had been his preceptor. At the commencement of the sixteenth century, the ancient Franciscan Province of Provence, founded in 1217, by Blessed John Bonelli, the disciple of St. Francis, was reformed and passed over to the Observance, and, about the same time, it chose St. Louis as its patron. Pope Clement V. gave it the name of the Province of St. Louis. (The feast of St. Louis of Anjou is celebrated on this day, August the nineteenth, throughout the whole Order as a double of the Second Class.) When the Franciscans of the Observance were re-established in France towards the middle of this century, they set up the new Province under the name and protection of our Saint. An indult of Pius IX., dated May the nineteenth, 1873, authorized the Religious of this Province to celebrate the Feast of St. Louis of Anjou as a double of the First Class with Octave.

St. Louis was accustomed to say "Jesus Christ is all my riches, He alone is sufficient for me. All abundance that is not my God, is want for me."

August 25.

St. Louis, King of France, Patron of the Friars Minor.

[1215—1270.]

Of the Third Order.

St. Louis, son of Louis VIII., King of France, was born at Poissy, April the twenty-fifth, 1215. His mother, the pious Blanche of Castile, brought him up for God and for France. It is especially to this admirable woman, herself a daughter of St. Francis, that France owes one of her greatest kings, and the Church one of her greatest saints.[1] "My son,"

[1] The life of St. Louis was written in Latin by his confessor, Geoffrey of Beaulieu, of the Order of St. Dominic, this labour was completed by William of Chartres, a religious of the same Order, who had likewise lived in intimacy with the holy king. The Bollandists have published these two biographies in the fifth volume for the month of August. We have another life of St. Louis written by a Friar Minor, who was for more than eighteen years the confessor of Queen Margaret, our Saint's consort, this life was translated into Latin and also published by the Bollandists. Sire de Joinville left a History of St. Louis, but many alterations have been made in his work, and it is recognized by the critics of our days that we do not possess it as it was originally written. Another contemporary writer, William of Nangis, a Benedictine of the Abbey of St. Denis, wrote in Latin the Annals of the reign of St. Louis; he afterwards made a French translation of them. Such are the primary sources which supply us with the life and acts of the holy and glorious monarch. During the course of the last two centuries St. Louis has had several biographers in France, unfortunately the greater number of them have written their histories under the influence of Jansenist or Gallican deas.

this virtuous mother often said to her child, "My son, God alone knows the affection I bear for you, but, deep and fervent as is the love of my heart, I would far rather see you stretched dead at my feet than know that your conscience was sullied by one single mortal sin." This holy teaching sank deep into a heart that grace had prepared for it, and the seed, sown in the good ground, brought forth abundant fruit. Louis was accustomed from his childhood to consider all things from the point of view belonging to faith. This thrice happy practice was in the young prince the motive and source of those high and noble sentiments, which later on preserved his heart from the danger of vain glory amidst pomp and grandeur, and from discouragement in adversity. His title of Christian was always incomparably dearer to him than his dignity as King.

We shall not here speak of his bravery on the battle field, nor of his justice with regard to his subjects, nor of his wisdom in the government of his States, nor indeed of any of those royal qualities which made him one of the greatest monarchs of France. We shall consider St. Louis in his relations with the Franciscan family, of which he on his throne was one of the greatest glories. Blanche of Castille surrounded her young son with able masters, one of whom was Pacificus, a disciple of St. Francis and the first Provincial of the Order in France. This religious had acquired great fame as a poet in the world, and had been greatly distinguished at the Court of the Emperor Frederick II. Queen Blanche gave her son another disciple of St. Francis, Blessed Mansueto of Castiglione Aretino, as confessor.

Louis had a tender affection for the Friars Minor ever afterwards. He founded several convents of their Order, he greatly enlarged that of Paris, and built its church which was one of the largest in the capital. He was equally attached to the sons of St. Dominic, he often used to say that, if it had been in his power to divide himself in two

he would have consecrated himself alike to both Orders. In the great storm which arose in the University against these two Religious families, the holy king openly took their part. According to the testimony of Joinville, he surrounded himself with a certain number of Dominican and Franciscan religious, chosen from among the most learned and most virtuous, and he kept them at his Court with the permission of Alexander IV. Among the number of the religious whom the holy monarch thus honoured with his friendship, we must give the first place to St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure. He often invited these two illustrious Doctors to his own table and he loved to converse with them concerning Divine things. St. Louis went so far as to think of entering the Order of Friars Minor when his eldest son should be of an age to succeed him, but the Queen opposed this project. He then resolved that he would at least put on the habit of the Third Order, and follow in the secrecy of his palace the Rule of the holy Patriarch. When he had become a son of St. Francis, he made a pilgrimage to Assisi, and stopped at Perugia in order to visit Blessed Brother Egidius.

A circumstance in the life of this pious monarch, which is related by a contemporary Friar Minor, brings out very distinctly indeed his love for the disciples of St. Francis. Father Salimbene of Parma, who was then in France for his studies, tells us in his spirited and precious Chronicle, that in 1248, St. Louis, before starting for the Crusade, stopped at the convent of Sens, in order to recommend himself to the prayers of the Religious assembled there for the Chapter, held under the presidency of Blessed John of Parma, Minister General. "In the year 1248, about the time of Pentecost," says this chronicler, "I left the convent of Auxerre in order to go to Sens, because the Chapter of the French Province was to be held there, and the Lord Louis King of France was to attend it . . . . The King of France left Paris to proceed to the Chapter. As soon as his

approach was made known, the Friars Minor went forth to meet him and receive him with honour. Friar Eudes Rigauld of the Order of Friars Minor, Doctor of the University of Paris and Archbishop of Rouen, put on his pontifical vestments to go before the king. I walked by his side. He was anxious and he made great haste, because his preparations had delayed him so much that the other religious were already gone forward and were waiting in the road for the king's arrival . . . . The king appeared to me slender and delicate, of moderate height, with an angelic countenance and a most gracious demeanour. He came to the church of the Friars Minor with no royal pomp, but in the garb of a pilgrim, his staff in his hand. The pilgrim's tippet well adorned the royal shoulders. He came not on horseback, but on foot. And the three counts, his brothers, followed him, clothed in the like fashion and with the like humility. The king set more value on the prayers and suffrages of the poor than on having a retinue of grand personages. And his devout spirit and recollected demeanour gave him the air of a religious rather than that of a man of war. When he was entered into the church of the Friars Minor, he genuflected very devoutly and then knelt in prayer before the Altar. As he was coming out of the church, I happened to be close to him on the threshold . . . . He then said aloud that no one was to enter the Chapter House except the men at arms and the religious with whom he wished to converse. As soon as we were assembled in the Chapter room, the king began to speak, in order to recommend to our prayers his own person, his brothers, the queen, his mother, and all those who accompanied him. Then devoutly kneeling, he humbly solicited the prayers and suffrages of the Fathers of the Chapter. Some of the French religious near me were so much moved on hearing him that they wept with abundance of tears. When the king had finished speaking, the Lord Odo, Cardinal Legate, who was to set sail with him,

addressed a few words to us. And then Friar John of Parma, whose place it was to answer the king, expressed himself in the following terms. 'Our king and lord, our benefactor and our father, insists on mingling with the assembly of the poor. He comes to us in humility and kindness, not to ask of us silver or gold, his treasury, thanks be to God, is sufficiently well stocked, but to solicit our prayers and suffrages, to which he has good right and title. You see him, my brethren, about to undertake a pilgrimage and crusade which must do honour to our Lord Jesus Christ. He carries aid to the Holy Land, he is going to fight the enemies of the faith. King Louis wants to honour the Church and the Christian religion, to save his own soul and help to save the souls of all who accompany him. As our lord the king has always been the chief benefactor and defender of our Order in Paris and throughout his kingdom, so when this illustrious monarch comes to-day to claim the suffrages of our Order, for himself and for the noble princes in his train, it is meet and just that we should respond to his desire. I shall not prescribe any obligation with regard to this to the French religious, for I know that they are disposed to do much more than I should think of imposing on them. But as I have to visit the convents of the whole Order, I have resolved to command every priest to celebrate four Masses, in honour of the Holy Ghost, of the Holy Cross, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of the Most Holy Trinity. And if it should come to pass that the king be called away from this world, fresh suffrages should be added. And if this does not fully meet his wishes, let my lord the king deign to prescribe what he pleases, for we are ready to obey him.'

"The king thanked Friar John of Parma, and held his answer to be so satisfactory that he desired to have it confirmed by letters with the General's seal affixed to them. And it was done as he desired. On that day the king dined with the community, and he provided the repast. Also there

were to be seen in the refectory of the convent the three brothers of the king, the Cardinal Legate, the Minister General, Friar Eudes Rigauld, Archbishop of Rouen, the Provincial of France, the Custodians, the Definitors, all the members of the Chapter and the foreign religious. . . .

"Next day the king continued his journey. As for me, as soon as the Chapter was over, I followed the king, for I was under an obedience from the Minister General to go with my companion to dwell in a convent in Provence. It was easy to rejoin the king for he frequently diverged from the direct road, to visit the convents of the Friars Minor and those of other religious in order to recommend himself to their prayers. This he constantly did till he arrived at the place where he was to embark. For my part, I arrived at the convent of Auxerre in which I had formerly lived. . . . Next day, which was a Sunday, the king came very early in the morning to visit this community and recommend himself to the prayers of the religious. He left his retinue in the village, which was very near the convent, and brought with him no one but his three brothers and some servants to mind the horses. As soon as he had finished saying his prayers before the altar, the religious brought some chairs but the king seated himself on the ground, and in the dust, as I saw with my own eyes, for the church was not paved. He called us to him, saying, "Come sweet sons, and listen to what I have to tell you." And we formed a circle round him, seated on the ground like himself, and his brothers did the like. The king recommended himself to the prayers of the religious, and when their prayers were promised him, he went out of the church to resume his journey.

"The king had already gone out, when he was told that his brother Charles was still praying in the church. The Saint seemed very well content indeed and waited. His two other brothers waited likewise at the door with the king. Charles, the youngest of the brothers, was Count of Provence. He was married to the queen's sister, he was in

prayer before a side altar of the church, near the entrance. As for me, I contemplated Prince Charles praying with fervour and the king waiting patiently at the door, and I was greatly edified."

The daughters of St. Clare, like the Friars Minor, had a large share in the charity and munificence of King St. Louis. He had several convents built for them, and in particular that of Longchamps near Paris, which was erected in favour of his pious sister, Blessed Isabella. St. Bonaventure was charged by the King to modify the Rule of St. Clare which that community wished to adopt, and at the French King's prayer, these modifications received the approval of the Holy See. Here we will quote a passage of Father Claude Frassen, concerning the relations of St. Louis with the community of Longchamps.

"It is not necessary," says this writer, "again to inform the French of this great Saint's admirable actions, they have already been made known to them by the authors, modern as well as ancient, who have described them with much faithfulness and eloquence. I shall speak solely of that which they have omitted, that which I have seen in a manuscript signed and sealed by the nuns who then lived in the royal monastery of Longchamps. These religious affirm that their founder St. Louis conducted them himself to the monastery and established them there, and, moreover, that after giving thanks to God by singing the *Te Deum* with them, he gave them an exhortation which was so touching and so full of the Spirit of God that all who heard it were moved to tears. They add that this great king sometimes came to them, and waited on them at their repast with great humility, and that when he was on the point of starting for Palestine, he begged the Superior to call the religious together, then, with his eyes bathed in tears, he entreated them to pray to God for a prosperous voyage and the success of his army." On his return from the Crusade, St. Louis landed in Provence, passed through

Lower Languedoc and stopped at Beziers. The archives of the Poor Clares of that town make mention of the visit which he made to the convent and of the deep impression which he left of his piety and charity.

As we have more especially proposed in this short sketch, to present St. Louis as a pattern for the members of the Third Order, of which he is the patron, we will now go through the principal chapters of the Rule, and show how perfectly this illustious disciple of St. Francis observed its precepts.

Purity of faith, and obedience to the Church and her visible Head, are the first conditions that St. Francis exacts from those who desire to embrace his Third Order.

St. Louis was above all things admirable in his Faith. His title of Christian was in his eyes incomparably superior to his kingly dignity. The holy monarch once said to his intimate friends that the greatest grace and the greatest honour that he had ever received in this world, had been granted to him by our Lord, at Poissy. Those who heard him were astonished at his words, in truth it seemed to them that it would have been more reasonable if the King had spoken of the city of Rheims, where he had been anointed and crowned King of France. "The good King smiled," says his biographer, "and then he told them that in the castle of Poissy he had received the grace of holy Baptism which he esteemed beyond all comparison preferable to all the honours and dignities of the world, as being the most precious of God's gifts, and the very highest of dignities. And therefore, in intimate correspondence he signed himself, 'Louis of Poissy.'"

His faith was lively, and it was immovable. "He used to say," writes de Joinville, "that we ought to believe the articles of the Faith so firmly, that neither for fear of death or of any harm that could happen to the body, should we have the will to run counter to them either in word or deed."

St. Louis gave the most striking proofs of his faith during the whole course of his life, but most of all he did so during his captivity in the East. Negotiations were opened between the emirs and the king relating to his deliverance, and that of the princes his brothers and of all the Crusaders who had been made prisoners. As soon as the conditions of the treaty were settled, the emirs swore to keep them, and they exacted a similar oath from the king. This was granted them. But they desired further, says his biographer, that the king should declare on his oath that if he did not keep the articles of the treaty he should deny God and the Faith of Jesus Christ. But the holy king regarded such an oath with horror, and he repeated over and over again, "Never shall that go forth from my lips." There is no doubt that he had the firmest intention to keep his promise, nevertheless it was not allowable for him to make use of a blasphemous formula even conditionally, and in spite of all the instances made to him, the saintly king remained unshaken in his refusal. Then an envoy of the emirs came to him and said, "Sire, the emirs are greatly provoked by your refusing to swear as they demand, after they have sworn according to your demand. And, be well assured of this, that if you do not submit, they will cut off your head, and the heads of your people." The king simply answered, that they could do what they pleased, but that he would rather die than live at enmity with God. As soon as the emirs had heard of this answer, they proceeded to the king and one of them said to him, "It is passing strange that you speak so boldly, you who are our prisoner and slave, to hear you, one might think that it is we who are your prisoners. Know that if you do not accept our conditions I will kill you this very moment. The king answered, "My body you may indeed slay, but you will not slay my soul."

After this admirable answer the holy king was seized and bound to a flag-staff, his hands were so tightly tied

that the blood started forth. His brother, Charles of Anjou, and all the barons who were present entreated him to add the clause demanded of him, so as not to expose all the prisoners to death. But the king replied, "Our Lord will do what He pleases with me and with you. I love you as my brothers and I love myself as myself, but God forbid that such words should ever be spoken by the tongue of the King of France, come what may." The emirs were filled with admiration at the spectacle of such courage and firmness, and they gave up their demand.

Not content with confessing the Faith of Jesus Christ and with seeking the inspiration of His maxims in all the actions of his life, St. Louis neglected no means of maintaining the precious Faith among his people, and even to infidel countries he sent apostolical men to carry to them the blessings of Christianity and civilization.

It was from his faith that St. Louis imbibed that boundless love and devotion for the Church, and that lowly and filial obedience to the Vicar of Jesus Christ, of which he gave proof during the whole of his life. "All those who were brought into close relations with him," says William of Chartres, "know well with what reverence and with what humility he behaved towards the Roman Church. With what devotion and obedience he was accustomed to receive the Apostolic rescripts and mandates, and with what submission and punctuality he performed them 'as a true son of obedience.'" In his last will he said to his son, "Be ever and always devout to the holy Church of Rome, and render to the Sovereign Pontiff the honour and respect which you owe him as your spiritual Father." St. Louis early inspired his children with that profound respect with which he was himself penetrated for the person of the Sovereign Pontiff. A clerk attached to the King of Navarre, on the point of going to Rome, asked Philip, the king's eldest son, who was then seventeen years of age, what message he desired to send to the Pope. The prince

modestly replied, "I should indeed like to send a salutation to His Holiness, 'if I dared to do so.'" This answer of the son of St. Louis was soon afterward reported to Urban IV., and he sent a letter full of tenderness to the young prince.

In their act of profession, the members of the Order of Penance make a special promise to keep God's commandments with more perfection than the common run of the faithful. The whole life of St. Louis shows us his perfect fidelity in keeping the Divine law, and his avoidance of anything that could bear even the appearance of sin. "For about twenty years," says Geoffrey of Beaulieu, "I was confessor to King St. Louis, so often did I hear his general confession, that I cannot tell how many times the king thus accused himself, and yet to the glory of God, I declare that never, throughout his whole life, was he knowingly guilty of anything that I should condemn as a mortal sin.

Joinville relates a conversation which sets forth still more plainly, perhaps, the Saint's horror of offending God. "He summoned me one day," says Joinville, "and said to me, 'I dare not converse with you always quite alone when we two talk of the things concerning God, because of the subtilty of your wit, therefore I have brought these religious whom you see here, and in their presence I wish to ask you a question.' And the question was this, 'Seneschal, what is God?' I replied, 'Sire, so good a thing, that there could be nothing better.' 'Truly,' said the king, 'that is well answered. And now, tell me, I beg, which you would prefer to be a leper or to have committed a mortal sin.' And I, who never told him a falsehood, I answered, 'that I would rather have committed thirty grievous sins than be a leper.' Next day, the king called me to him alone, made me sit down at his feet, and said to me, 'How could you say such a thing yesterday?' I answered 'that I still said the same.' And he replied, 'You spoke like a heedless fellow who answers without thinking, for there is no leprosy so ugly as

mortal sin. The soul which is in the state of mortal sin is like unto the devil . . . . I beg of you then with all my might, do this for the love of God and for my love, determine in your heart to accept every bodily ill, leprosy or all other maladies, rather than suffer mortal sin to enter into your soul.'"

St. Louis, in his dress and appointments, followed the rules of simplicity and modesty prescribed in the third Chapter of the Rule. "After taking his vow of moderation," says the historian Fleury, "he renounced the use of bright colours, of precious stuffs and furs. He ceased to wear scarlet, green or silver grey. Nor was there any gilding on his spurs or on the reins of his horses. And as it was the privilege of the poor to receive his cast off clothes, he arranged with his almoner for a sum of money to repay them for the diminution in value, so that they should lose nothing by his modesty. Though, by reason of his exalted position and its requirements, St. Louis had usually to wear the livery of the Third Order underneath his ordinary clothes, yet on certain occasions it was his pride and glory to wear it publicly. Father Claude Frassen says, "St. Louis held the habit of the Third Order in such great veneration that he wore it publicly on solemn feasts, and when he made any pilgrimage, and when he went to do battle against the infidels. And God indeed glorified this profound humility and the esteem which the holy king had for his garb of penitence, by the public chastisement which was inflicted on an impious courtier of the Count of Flanders, who, when asked by his master on his return from the court of France, whether he had seen the king, replied with a coarse jest, 'Yes I saw that bigot in his monk's frock.' He was instantly punished for his sacrilegious insolence, he fell down as if struck with epilepsy, his neck twisted, his eyes staring wildly, his face frightful to look on, and his whole body racked by sharp pains. The holy habit which St. Louis wore, incomparably more precious than the kingly

purple, is preserved with singular veneration in the Royal Monastery of the Religious Ladies of St. Clare in the faubourg of St. Marcel-lez-Paris."

Profane amusements are forbidden by the fourth Chapter of the Rule. One of our Saint's biographers tells us that, "when he reached his twentieth year, St. Louis once and for ever renounced all frivolous amusements. He gave up his dogs and falcons, and also left off wearing rich garments. And, knowing that nothing detaches the heart from the love of the world and strengthens it against temptations so much as the study of the Sacred Scriptures, he every day devoted himself to it as much as his other occupations allowed him."

William of Chartres adds that he would never have any stage-players in his palace. "He detested them, he held them in abomination, and he strove to inspire in his children and in all his family the contempt which he felt for such follies."

Profane songs were not less displeasing to the pious monarch. "In the days of his youth," says Queen Margaret's confessor, "he commanded one of the esquires, who was singing worldly songs, to leave off doing so, and he made him learn many anthems of our Lady and the hymn *Ave maris stella*, and to help him, the good king sometimes sang them with him." He reprimanded those who spent too much of their time in play. "At the time of his expedition to the East," says Joinville, "he asked one day on board ship what his brother the Duke of Anjou was about. He was told that the duke was playing at dice with Monseigneur Gauthier de Nemours. King Louis, tottering from weakness, then went to the spot where they were playing, he took up the dice and the board and threw them into the sea. And he was very angry indeed with his brother for having so soon begun to play with dice."

In addition to the fasts and abstinences of the Church, St. Louis, according to contemporary biographers, fasted during the holy time of Advent and on all the Fridays of

the year. He made but one meal on Mondays and Wednesdays. And lastly, he added so many macerations to the austerities of the Franciscan Rule, that his confessors were frequently obliged to make use of their authority to prevent his over-stepping the bounds of prudence.

Like a true son of the Order of Penance he refused his senses any satisfaction. Queen Margaret's confessor says, "The blessed king liked large fish and nevertheless he often refused the large fish that were offered to him at table, and sent for little ones which he eat. At other times he had the large fish carved as if he were going to partake of them, and then it was noticed that he never touched them, but reserved them for the poor, and contented himself with some broth. After his return from the East he never again eat pike, or any delicate fish, all such that were served at his table he caused to be given to the poor. When lampreys were first brought to Paris, they were put before the king, but he did not eat them, and he gave to one of the poor who were present, the portion which was offered to him. . . . It was the same with regard to early vegetables or fruits. . . . Many times it happened that delicate roasts or other meats with exquisite sauces were placed before him, and to destroy the taste he mixed water with them. Few men at that time put so much water in their wine as good King Louis. . . . After his return from the Crusade he would never have either feather bed or straw mattress on his bed. His bed consisted of some planks, over which was spread a cotton mattress with a mean counterpane."

Assiduous frequentation of the Sacraments is prescribed by the sixth Chapter of the Rule. And on this point again and above all, St. Louis was a pattern of faithfulness and fervour and wonderful piety. According to the testimony of Geoffrey de Beaulieu he made a devout confession every Friday, and sometimes even oftener if his delicate conscience reproached him for any fault. After his return from the crusade he had two confessors in ordinary, one a Dominican,

the other a Franciscan. The respect which he bore to all priests was redoubled in the case of his confessors. It happened several times that the king, having knelt down to make his confession, perceived that there was a door or a window open. He would immediately arise, and anticipating his confessor, go himself to close the apartment. In vain would the confessor try to stop him, the royal penitent would say, "It is proper for me to do it, just now you are the father, I am your son."

After his confession, says William of Nangis, he would beg his confessor to give him the discipline, and when the confessor, out of consideration for his royal penitent, struck him too lightly, the Saint asked to be flogged more soundly. For some time the king had as confessor a man who treated him very severely, and as long as this priest remained with him, the holy penitent had much to suffer, but he never complained. Later on, after the death of this first confessor, the king with a charming humility smilingly bade his new confessor notice that he who had preceded him had not done his business with a light hand.

How can we describe the fervour with which St. Louis approached the banquet of the Eucharist? At the moment of Communion he advanced, humble and recollected, up to the sanctuary of the church. Once there he proceeded on his knees to the altar, then he recited the *Confiteor* with groans and tears, and received the Sacred Body of our Saviour with transports of love and devotion.

In the seventh Chapter of the Rule it is commanded that the Brothers of Penance shall not take up arms save for the defence of the Church, of the Christian Faith, or of their own country. St. Louis never drew his sword but for the defence of these three great causes. No one was braver than he on the battle field. None have carried the flag of France with a firmer hand, and never has it waved higher. Therefore the God of battles gave him more than victory, God gave him in his captivity the sufferings and the honour

of a long martyrdom. And this courage and heroism, so much admired even by his enemies, St. Louis drew from his frequent intercourse with God in his long and fervent prayers. He understood the importance and necessity of prayer, he knew that without help from on High he could not labour usefully for the temporal and eternal happiness of his subjects. He knew that no nation is happy unless God Himself deigns to become the Protector thereof, *Beata gens cujus est Dominus Deus ejus.* And, without neglecting any human means, St. Louis ever put his strength and his hope in God alone. Independently of the Canonical Office, prescribed by the eighth Chapter of the Rule, he daily recited the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin, and the Office of the Dead.

The pious king regularly assisted at the different parts of the Divine Office which was celebrated by the clerks of his chapel. He rose at midnight to be present at Matins, and remained in prayer till daybreak. In the morning he usually attended several Masses. After having consecrated long hours to prayer and to consulting God on the interests of his kingdom, St. Louis every day gave to the material business of the State quite as much time as is commonly given to it by those monarchs who are most careful to perform their duty. "Many great lords murmured," says Geoffrey of Beaulieu, "because the king was present at so many Offices, so many Masses and so many sermons, it was, they thought, so much time lost. The holy king heard this, and he contented himself with observing, 'They would find no fault with me if I were really to lose double the time in playing with dice, or in galloping through the woods with hounds and falcons.' Would to God indeed that sovereigns would allow themselves to be taken away from the service of the State for prayer only! It is in serving God that good kings learn to serve the State."

The ninth Chapter of the Rule commands the member of the Third Order to make their wills. We still have the

will which St. Louis left to his eldest son, Philip, in which the Saint reveals to us his mind, his virtues as Christian and as King, together with all the treasures of his heart. In another testament, which is properly speaking his last will and testament, Louis regulates the disposition of various pious legacies, and explains the order of his last wishes on divers subjects.

Most excellently did St. Louis fulfil the office of peacemaker, as recommended by the tenth Chapter of the Rule. Queen Margaret's confessor tells us "that he proved himself above all things jealous for peace, the fervent friend of union and concord, for nothing was more contrary to his desires than dissensions and scandals. And, consequently, during the holy king's reign the storms of civil discord subsided, troubles of all kinds ceased, and the dawn of peace rose over the kingdom of France."

The pious monarch did not stop at the pacification of his own States, his spirit of equity inspired so much confidence in other sovereigns that they chose him several times as arbitrator in their disputes. Thus he was called upon to play the part of peacemaker in the debates which arose between the Duke of Brittany and the King of Navarre, between the King of Navarre and the King of England, and again between the last-named king and the barons of his kingdom. His councillors once remonstrated with him, and said he would do better to leave these princes at war among themselves, as they would become weakened both in men and money, and so give him opportunities of profiting by their dissensions. Louis reproved his councillors very severely for this as being very bad advice, and said, "If I were to leave my neighbours at war in order to take advantage of their embarrassments, I should fail grievously in Christian charity and render myself worthy of God's anger. I should incur the blame of my fellow men, and I should deserve that they should forget their own quarrels and join together to attack me and take away what belongs to me."

St. Louis observed with great faithfulness that point of Divine Law, enforced by the Rule, which forbids unnecessary swearing. "I was full twenty-two years in the holy king's company," says Joinville, "and never once did I hear him swear, neither by God nor His Mother, nor by His Saints. I never heard him name the devil, unless indeed the word was in a book or in the life of a Saint spoken of in the book." Another biographer tells us that the Saint would sometimes say, "By my name," never thinking he was to blame in that, but a Franciscan religious having reproved him for it, he was never again heard to make use of the expression. A Dominican religious said of him, "I had frequent and long conversations with the blessed king, never once did I hear an idle word proceed from his lips, and still less an illnatured word." St. Louis, as is well known, enacted extremely severe laws against blasphemers. He held in great honour the memory of his illustrious ancestor Philip Augustus, who had never permitted anyone to blaspheme with impunity in his palace.

The twelfth Chapter of the Rule desires the members of the Order to see that their families serve God faithfully. St. Louis took care to train his children himself in all Christian virtues and in the exercises of true piety. Every evening, according to his biographers, he summoned them to his own room and instructed them in the truths of religion and the practice of virtue. He took them regularly to services and sermons, he taught them to recite the Office of the Blessed Virgin, he initiated them from early childhood in the holy practices of mortification and penance. The constant and serious business of the State, notwithstanding that he transacted it with extreme solicitude, never turned him away from the duties which he had imposed on himself with regard to his children.

The saintly king was in the habit of serving the poor, he frequently washed their feet. He desired his sons to be present when he did so in order to teach them to perform

works of mercy, and he sometimes commanded them to fulfil this office of charity and humility. Friar Godfrey, Guardian of the Friars Minor of Paris, relates the following anecdote on this subject. "The king, according to his custom, was distributing food among the poor, and he commanded his eldest son to help in this distribution and wait on the poor. The courtiers who were present and saw this, were troubled, and they ventured to say to him that it was a shame for the son of the king to perform such a service. St. Louis at once replied, "There is no shame in a son doing what his father commands him to do."

The zeal and solicitude of our Saint extended to all the persons of his household. "He would have in his service," says Queen Margaret's confessor, "good men, men who were honest and just, nor would he suffer any to remain in his house who used gross language, or any man whom he knew to be in mortal sin. Above all he exacted from every one very great purity, and great respect for God and the Blessed Virgin Mary. If he learnt that one of his household had committed an action which was a mortal sin, he dismissed him from his palace, and in like manner he immediately dismissed those who were in the habit of swearing."

The humble king saw in all his servants his brethren in Jesus Christ, and such was his interior respect for their persons that he never addressed any, not even the meanest of his varlets, in the second person singular. The severity which he sometimes used was prompted by no other motives than those of God's honour, and of fraternal charity. St. Louis neglected no opportunity of making his servants and all those about him hear the word of God, and he furnished them all with the means of working out their own salvation. "When we were coming back from beyond seas," says Geoffrey of Beaulieu, "during the seven weeks that the voyage lasted, all the passengers, by order of the king, had to listen to three sermons a week. Louis further insisted that discourses should be preached to the sailors when the

sea was calm, because he said these poor fellows could so rarely hear the word of God. Moreover he commanded that the sailors should go to confession to the priests whom they should choose, and on this subject he himself made them a most salutary and efficacious exhortation. He particularly set before them the care they ought to take to keep their consciences clear, they who were continually running the risk of sudden death in the midst of the daily perils of the sea. I also took a note of these truly memorable words which the good king spoke, "If it should so happen, that one of you should be required for the working of the ship just while he is confessing, I would willingly go to take his place and haul the ropes and do all that he would do."

In the thirteenth Chapter of the Rule, St. Francis exhorts the members of the Third Order to perform works of mercy, and on this point again, St. Louis can be put before them as a pattern. Throughout his whole life and under all circumstances, he was the comforter of the sick and the afflicted, the servant of the poor and the leper. "He had a marvellous compassion," say his biographers, "for the destitute, for those who suffered in any kind of way, and his whole heart went out towards the sick and the poor. This kingly heart was truly a spiritual refuge for all the miserable, and from it there flowed, as it were, a wave of charity which flooded all places with alms and works of mercy."

On the Friday and Saturday of every week, St. Louis himself waited on thirteen poor men to whom he gave food in his own room, and among whom he distributed abundant alms. On Saturdays, before serving them, he chose out three of the poorest, and led them to his dressing room, and there, on his knees before them, he washed their feet, wiped them and kissed them. Then he gave them water to wash their hands, gave each of them an alms and kissed the hands of each. "His chamberlains," says his biographer, "more than once offered to wash the feet of these

poor themselves, when their state happened to be more disgusting than usual, but the king never allowed another to take this office of charity from him. Once it happened that one of these poor men, who did not know the king, said to him with much simplicity, "Wash me more carefully, my feet are not clean enough yet." Those present, much astonished that he should dare thus to speak to the king, reproved him for being so exacting, but the holy king complied with the poor fellow's desire, washed his feet afresh and devoutly kissed them."

Every day thirteen poor persons were fed in the king's house, and then received an alms. Three of them took their repast at a little table close to him, and he often gave to one of them the portion served to himself. "One day," says William of Chartres, "a bowl of excellent broth was set before him. The good king soaked some pieces of bread in it and ordered that the whole should be given to one of these three poor men. This man's hands were dirty and covered with ulcers. He put his fingers into the broth and drew out some of the pieces of soaked bread and eat them, he would have nothing more, and asked that the bowl might be taken away. The good king observed this, and although he had seen all that had passed, he said, 'Give me back my soup,' and to the great astonishment of all present, he eat it as if he found it exquisitely flavoured."

Besides the alms and the charity which he himself practised, St. Louis caused about two hundred poor to be assembled every day, and abundant provisions were distributed to them. Moreover twice a week, by his order, a general distribution was made in favour of all the poor, who should present themselves, however numerous they might be. The poor who were ashamed to beg, *les pauvres honteux*, were the particular objects of his solicitude.

During the frequent journeys which he made through the provinces of his kingdom, he gave large alms to those in distress. During the first visits which he made to his

States on his return from the Crusade, he had a general distribution of alms made every day. To this would come ten thousand and, sometimes, twenty thousand poor. When famine ravaged some province of the kingdom, the king, says William of Chartres, would send officers of proved virtue thither with considerable sums of money, so that in years of scarcity he made restitution to those provinces for the taxes which he had received from them in times of plenty.

St. Louis founded a large number of hospitals, in order to insure for centuries to his dearly loved poor the care and support which he lavished on them during his lifetime. He frequently visited the sick and the lepers in these homes of suffering. He comforted them, served them with his own hands, and, as he dressed their wounds, he honoured in these sufferers the person of our Lord Jesus. Queen Margaret's confessor tells us that "he often visited the *Hotels Dieu* of Paris, Pontoise, Versailles, Orleans, Rheims, etc., and tended in person those who lay therein. To each one he gave a certain nnmber of pence, and bread, meat or fish according to their requirements. He cut up the bread and meat with his own hands, and on his knees before the patients, he put the morsels into their mouths. He supported them with his arms, and wiped their lips when they had finished. Several of these patients were so disgusting that the King's servants and sergeants were horrified and they held themselves aloof, astonished that the king could endure the mere aspect of these poor wretches. Many times the attendants left the wards, so repugnant was it to them to breathe the foul and infected atmosphere, but the good king never seemed to feel the slightest repugnance. The example of his heroic patience bore fruit, for frequently several knights and the persons in his train seeing him act thus, imitated him and did likewise." Biographers relate numbers of similar anecdotes, all of which reveal a truly sublime charity in this most worthy

disciple of St. Francis. No sovereign ever devoted such large sums to the alleviation of every misery and infirmity.

The devotion to the Passion of our Saviour, which the holy monarch had imbibed in the school of Francis of Assisi, led him in 1239 to redeem from the Venetians the Holy Crown of Thorns. To receive this treasure, and a celebrated relic of the True Cross, Louis had a chapel built, *la Sainte Chapelle*, which is to this day one of the architectural glories of France.

The years which followed the first expedition of St. Louis to the East were years consecrated to the procuring of the well-being of his kingdom. He proved himself during that time more than ever the type and pattern of Christian kings. Whilst he was thus labouring with so much ardour for the happiness of his subjects, he received the most afflicting news from Asia. He resolved to make a last effort in favour of the unfortunate Christians. He put himself at the head of a second Crusade, and, as he did the first time, embarked at Aigues-Mortes, July, 1270. However, instead of making his way to Egypt, he desired to land at Tunis in the hope of converting the chief of that state to Christianity. "What happiness!" said the pious monarch, "if I could become the godfather of a Mahometan prince!" But the king of Tunis forgot his promises, nor did he reply to the king's proposition save by a vigorous resistance. St. Louis, however, would not attack him before the arrival of his brother Charles of Anjou, who was to bring him fresh troops. During this time sickness was spreading through the French army. The generous prince, at this critical moment, employed all the zeal of his charity in visiting and tending the sick. Not one of them succumbed without having had the consolation of hearing some of his pious words of encouragement. Attacked by the epidemic which was decimating his troops, Louis felt his health failing for some days. He rendered his soul to God on the twenty-fifth of August, 1270. He was fifty-five years old.

The saintly king's body was brought to France by his son Philip III., and was deposited in the church of St. Denis. The revolution of 1793 scattered these sacred relics, with the exception of some that had been given to different churches. St. Louis was canonized by Boniface VIII. (His feast is celebrated on this day, August the twenty-fifth, throughout the whole Church as a Semi Double, in the Order of St. Francis as a Double of the Second Class, and in the Third Order as a Double of the First Class with Octave.)

St. Louis in his will and testament says to his son, "I recommend you in the first place, my most dear son, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your strength, for without that there is no salvation. My son, you must keep yourself from all things that can displease God, that is to say from all grievous sin. You must be ready to suffer martydom rather than commit a mortal sin. And more than this, if it should please God to send you any tribulation, you must accept it with thanksgiving, and acknowledge that it comes to you for your good and that you have merited it by your sins. If He sends you prosperity, you must humbly thank Him for it, and take great care not to abuse it by giving way to vain glory or any other vice, for it is a very great sin indeed to make use of God's gifts to offend Him. . . . Be grateful to God for all His graces so that you may deserve to receive greater ones. . . . Listen willingly to the Word of God, in public as well as in private, and strive to gain the Indulgences of our Holy Mother Church. . . ."

August 27.

Blessed Gabriel Maria, Priest.
Founder of the Royal Order of the Annonciade.
[1463—1532.]
Of the Order of Friars Minor.

This fervent Servant of Mary was born at Riom, in the year 1463. His parents were alike distinguished by their noble birth and their virtues.[1] From his early years he showed most excellent qualities and a decided taste for piety. He was remarkable for an extreme purity of soul and a tender and truly filial love for our Blessed Lady. Mary accepted the homage of her young servant, for she preserved unsullied in his heart the lily of innocence, and likewise bestowed upon him the gifts of great intelligence and resolute perseverance, faculties which were brought out later on, in the works which the blessed man undertook for the Seraphic Order and Holy Church.

[1] Blessed Gabriel Maria was called in the world Gilbert of Nicola and was known in the Order by the name of Father Gilbert. The annalists of the Order sometimes mention him by this name. But when the servant of God went to Rome, in 1518, at the time he was Commissary General of the Order, Pope Leo X., struck by his devotion to Mary, and especially to the mystery of the Annunciation, declared that for the future he should be called *Gabriel Maria*, a name which would better express the inmost sentiments of his heart. The life of Blessed Gabriel Maria was written by Father Honorat Nicquet, of the Society of of Jesus, Paris, 1655. Louis Douy d'Attichy, Bishop of Riez, gives an abridged life of him in his history of St. Jeanne, published in 1644. We have here followed these biographies and Wadding's Annals.

On the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God he went to church to hear the sermon of a religious of the Order of St. Francis. The preacher spoke of the matchless beauty of the Immaculate Queen of Heaven and of the glory prepared for pure souls who should walk in her footsteps. It was a sudden revelation to the pious young man. He promised on the spot to consecrate himself wholly to Jesus and Mary, and he wished to do so in the Seraphic Order, so dear to the Immaculate Virgin. When the servant of God attained his sixteenth year, he ran away from his father's house and went to Mehun sur Yièvre, then to Amboise, to ask the favour of being admitted into the Order. But his youthful face, his puny and delicate frame, were deemed to prove him unfitted for the strictness of the Franciscan Rule. This was a severe trial to his generous soul. But he put all his trust in Mary, and crossing Touraine and Poitou he came to the convent of the Observance of our Lady of the Fount, near Rochelle. The Friars questioned the young stranger, and he owned how he had already been refused at Amboise, but that our Lady still kept alive the desire in his heart. The Friars Minor were touched by his frankness and courage, and, notwithstanding his apparent delicacy, he was clothed in the Seraphic habit.

All the wishes of the young postulant being now gratified, he went on from virtue to virtue, and soon became a pattern of obedience, regularity and fervour to his brothers. "It was surprising," says an old writer of his life, "How careful he was to learn in what the perfection of the Rule consisted. He never wilfully infringed it. He often prayed with his arms stretched in the form of a cross, he considered himself unworthy of living in the company of so many good religious, and he served them in all humility. He forestalled their wants, he could hardly bear to see the young novices, his companions, working for the house, for he wanted to help them all. Very often, indeed, he would hide their brooms so that they would be obliged to retire to their cells, and,

by this means, leave him all the work to do. But, above all, he had a very great respect for the oldest, as to those who had spent their strength in the service of God, and he esteemed their old age as very precious, as having been hastened by the mortifications and labours of religion. He was never tired of serving Masses, indeed he would use many little artifices, full of piety and innocence, such as hiding the surplices of his companions, serving very willingly in their stead. He was among the first to be seen in the choir, and he left it the last, praying God that by the merits of so many good religious who had just left it, he might become worthy to have a share in their devotion . . . . so that his Master of Novices had to make use rather of a bridle to restrain him from excess, than of a goad to incite him on the path of virtue, for he thought no means were hard or difficult which led to such a beautiful end.[2]"

After his religious profession, the blessed man made rapid progress in the path of perfection. His life was one continual prayer, he shed many tears while meditating on the mysteries of the Passion of our Lord and the sorrows of His Blessed Mother. He had such a lively devotion to the Holy Eucharist that when He offered the Holy Sacrifice, his face was transfigured, his tears flowed, and his fervour infected all those who assisted at it. Gabriel was deeply humble and mortified, and sought to escape all honours. He refused several bishoprics, and would never consent to accept the grade of doctor, though he was one of the most learned men of his time. Pope Leo X. conferred the title of doctor on him of his own accord. The humble religious never spoke of it, and it only became known after his death that this favour had been bestowed on him by the Sovereign Pontiff. Careful never to judge or blame any actions but his own, Blessed Gabriel could see nothing but virtue and perfection in his brothers. He was accustomed to say, "The humble have two eyes in their heart, one with which

[2] Life of Father Gabriel Maria, by Father Honoret Nicquet.

to see their own faults, the other with which to see the good qualities of others."

Notwithstanding his weak constitution, his austerities were most severe, he took two disciplines to blood every day, one for sinners, the other for the souls in Purgatory. He wore a hair-shirt, he fasted, besides the days prescribed by the Rule, every Saturday and the eves of feasts of our Lord and the Blessed Virgin. His love for suffering made him look upon a day as lost if he had not had something to endure, either in body or soul, some trial or some mortification which gave him a share in the shame of the Cross. For this reason he was grateful to those who caused him some trouble and gave him an opportunity of suffering, he never failed to pray for them and to do them any service in his power. Father Gabriel was full of gentleness and charity towards everyone and more particularly towards his inferiors. "No more indulgent or charitable man could be found," says the writer of his life, "than this good servant of God." However, he never hesitated to use severity if the glory of God, or the good of souls, or the maintenance of observances required it. His charity for his neighbour was unlimited, his whole life was devoted to the salvation and sanctification of souls. He often begged for prayers for sinners or for the dead, he himself prayed every day for them, being convinced that this holy practice is very pleasing to God, and still more profitable to the just soul than alms or penitential austerities. In short, all the virtues which characterise the saints, shone in an eminent degree in this blessed man. Leo X. had such a high opinion of his holiness that when the humble Friar knelt to kiss his feet, this great Pope bent and kissed with reverence Father Gabriel's Crown of our Lady's joys.

Blessed Gabriel Maria gave himself to the study of philosophy and theology for twenty years, either as disciple or master. He earned such a great reputation in these sciences that the most learned of his time used to have

recourse to his advice. His brothers held his wisdom, learning, and virtue in such high estimation that they raised him to the chief offices in the Order. He was Guardian of the convents of Amboise and Paris, three times Provincial of Aquitaine, twice Vicar General of the Friars Minor of the Observance for the Ultramontane branch. He filled this last office until 1517. At this time, Leo X. had called together the great General Chapter, at Rome, and conferred on the Friars Minor of the Observance the sole right of naming, in the future, the Minister General of the Order, the successor of St. Francis. Blessed Gabriel Maria assisted as Vicar General in this assembly, which is so celebrated in the Franciscan annals. The Minister General, Christopher of Numale, having been chosen from the Italian branch, a Commissary General had to be elected, as the Bull of Leo X. prescribed, to govern the Ultramontane branch, that is to say, the Observance of France, Spain, and this side of the mountains. Father Gabriel Maria was unanimously chosen to fill the office of Commissary General.

During the years that he filled this office, the holy prelate displayed great zeal in visiting the Provinces entrusted to his care, in founding convents and in making the spirit of the Seraphic Patriarch bloom again everywhere. Yet he exercised the apostolic ministry all the same, to the great benefit of souls, through the whole course of his life. In 1519, he erected into a Province, under the title of St. Gabriel, the Custody of the Holy Gospel, which was the cradle of the Discalced Friars of the Observance in Spain. In 1520, in the Congregation held at Bordeaux, under the presidence of the Minister General, Francis Licheti, he was confirmed in his office of Commissary General for three years. A little later on, the Pope conferred on him the charge of Inquisitor, to combat Protestantism which was beginning to spread from Germany into the neighbouring provinces. In 1529, in the Chapter General held at Parma,

he was elected Definitor General for France, with Father Arnault of St. Felix, Minister of the Province of St. Louis. It was whilst exercising this last office that his holy career drew to its close. Always equal to the occasion in the different ministries which were confided to him, the Saint spent himself unceasingly for the interests of the Order and the increase of the Kingdom of God.

However all these labours were not the only work that Providence had marked out for him. Blessed Gabriel Maria had been chosen by the Blessed Virgin to co-operate in the foundation of an Order which was to be specially consecrated to her. Whilst he was Guardian of the convent at Amboise, the talents of this holy religious, but still more his remarkable virtue, had attracted the attention of the Court. He had been appointed to succeed Father John de la Fontaine, as confessor to St. Jeanne of Valois, daughter of Louis XI. and wife of the Duke of Orleans. It is well known that this prince, when he came to the throne under the name of Louis XII., obtained a decree from the Holy See declaring his marriage with Jeanne de Valois to be null and void. The pious princess, with submissive resignation, withdrew to Bourges, to a castle which is still in existence. She sought consolation in her misfortunes from piety alone, and devoted herself to found the Order of the Virgin Mary, or of the *Annonciade*.[8] The Blessed Virgin herself had appeared to her, to make known her wish that this institution should be founded in the Church by means of her.

Jeanne wished that Father Gabriel, her wise and pious director, should be the protector, the visitor, and, as it were, the Angel Guardian of the new Institute, and that her daughters should always be under the direction of the Friars Minor of the Observance.

As soon as the blessed man understood that the Will of God and the glory of Mary imposed on him the obligation of seconding the work of the pious queen, he devoted him-

[8] See the life of St. Jeanne de Valois, February 4.

self to it unreservedly. He was the protector of the Order in its beginnings, wrote the Rule, got it approved by the Holy See, enlisted many vocations for it. After the death of the royal foundress, he redoubled his solicitude and care in maintaining the first fervour of the humble Institute. He was the director thereof for thirty years. He founded the monasteries of Albi, Bruges, Béthune, Rodez, Bordeaux, and Louvain, wrote the Constitutions and a Declaration of the Rule. Lastly, he went to Rome seven times in the interests of his spiritual daughters.

In the work of this foundation, there is one circumstance well worth relating, as showing the holiness of this great servant of Mary, and his credit with God. Blessed Gabriel having written the Rule of the Annonciade under the inspiration of Mary, Father William Morin was sent to Rome to beg for the approval thereof. This religious was a learned theologian and a man of consummate prudence, he was favourably received by Alexander VI., but his request was unanimously rejected by the cardinals. They founded their refusal on the articles of the fourth Lateran Council and the second Council of Lyons, which forbade the foundation of new Religious Orders in the Church. Father Gabriel was convinced that the work was in the designs of God, and did not allow himself to be discouraged by this want of success. Putting all his trust in Mary, he undertook a journey to Rome himself, and went to lay the humble petition of St. Jeanne at the feet of the Vicar of Jesus Christ. Alexander VI. had a great affection for the royal family of France, he consented that the matter should again be put under deliberation. But once more the cardinals were unanimous in rejecting the new Rule. They were all of opinion that, according to the Decrees of the Councils, it was more desirable to reanimate the primitive fervour of the ancient Orders than to create new ones. At the termination of the consistory, Father Gabriel learnt from the Pope's own lips the decision which a second time rejected his request.

The confidence of the servant of God was not shaken by this fresh failure. He remembered how his Seraphic Father had met with opposition from Innocent III., and that God had eventually crowned his desires with success. He therefore had recourse to prayer. He spent the whole night in prayer to the Blessed Virgin, beseeching her to take under her protection a work which she had herself inspired and which had no other object but her glory. Now, on this same night, God sent a vision to Cardinal Ferrera, Chancellor of the Dataria, one of the most eminent men in the Sacred College, through his learning and piety, and the one also who had made the most strenuous opposition to the creation of a new Order. The deacon St. Laurence and the Patriarch St. Francis appeared to him in his sleep. They both stretched a protecting hand over Father Gabriel, whilst they seemed to reproach the cardinal for his opposition. The chancellor awoke with tears in his eyes, and blamed himself bitterly for having hindered the work of God. After having prayed for a long time at the tomb of the holy apostles he sent for St. Jeanne's envoy. Father Gabriel had just said Mass for the success of his work. He went to the cardinal, who welcomed him as an angel sent from God, told him of his vision, and promised to be the advocate and protector of the Annonciade. The great cardinal then conducted the humble religious to the Pope, and pleaded his cause so well with the Sacred College that, on the fourteenth of February, 1502, Alexander VI. published a Rule, by which he approved the Order of the Virgin Mary, confirmed the Rule, and appointed Father Gabriel Visitor General of the new institute. Mary's cause was won, and God granted this success to the prayers of the holy religious whom His Providence had set over the work.

Father Gabriel Maria had been from his childhood trained for this work by his tender love for the Queen of Heaven. Devotion to Mary, moreover, was, as it were, the soul of his whole life, he devoted it entirely to serving and glorifying

Mary. In everything, his first motive was to please her; he devoted to her all his efforts of mind, all the longings of his heart. He even bound himself by vow to say nothing that would not be pleasing to his great Queen. Whilst he was Guardian of the great convent of Paris, a doctor dared to attack in his presence the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God. Father Gabriel Maria fired up immediately with holy zeal, and defended the cause of the Immaculate Virgin so well that the doctor was convinced by his learning and eloquence, and was obliged to own himself vanquished. Father Gabriel had always in his heart and on his lips the sweet name of Mary. He signed his letters, "Your servant in Mary," or, "Your father in Mary." He thought, so to say, of nothing but Mary, he talked of nothing but Mary. He turned all his conversations, his sermons, his discourses upon his one favourite subject. In all his sermons he would bring in quite appropriately a verse of the *Magnificat*, or the "Hail Mary." Though he was well versed in all theological matters, "he was especially learned and eloquent in this matter," says one of his biographers, "and when there was question of praising the glorious Virgin or defending her against her enemies, the zeal which he had for her service gave him new power to acquit himself well . . . . he had acquired such familiarity with her, from the holy custom and diligence of ejaculatory prayers which he addressed to her as so many arrows and darts which he shot up to Heaven and which were the faithful messengers of his heart, that you would see him in his sermons, not only apostrophizing her in a very affectionate manner, but also speaking to her familiarly, as if he saw her there present, and as he generally began his discourses with her, so he also finished them with her."[4] His favourite prayers were the *Ave Maria* and the *Magnificat*, he had them always on his lips.

Blessed Gabriel Maria was not content with praying to

[4] Abridgment of his life in the history of St. Jeanne de Valois, by Messire Lollys d'Attichy, Bishop of Riez.

Mary, he strove, above all, to imitate her. Mary was the pattern which he set always before his eyes, and in reproducing her virtues he arrived at the high sanctity which won the admiration of his contemporaries. His zeal in propagating devotion to the Queen of Angels was untold. He wrote to a nun of the Annonciade, "The chief thing you have to do, is to praise and love Mary, so much so that you must make it your occupation, and when you have no obedience or special affair to attend to, you must forthwith have recourse to your exercise, which should be to praise Mary by having constantly in your heart or on your lips some praises, either hymns, or canticles, or prayers. So much so that in walking, in watching, in speaking, even in sleeping, in doing whatsoever it may be, your heart and your wish must be to praise Mary, to magnify her, and extol her to others, speaking of her virtues. May the same holy Virgin give you this blessing.[5] . . . Mary wished to reward the love of her devout servant when she inspired Pope Leo X. to change the name of the blessed man and to give him the sweet name of Mary which he had always on his lips and in his heart.

In 1526, Father Gabriel, having gone to make a visit to the Annonciades of Bordeaux, was seized with a violent fever, which reduced him to extreme weakness and brought him to the point of death. He then thought of writing his spiritual testament for the consolation of his daughters. But the hour was not come when this indefatigable workman was to go and receive his reward in Heaven. He lived several years longer, but he never again recovered from the great weakness which had been brought on by his labours and austerities. Notwithstanding his weakness he would not give up any of his usual occupations. Indeed he gave himself more zealously than ever to his spiritual exercises and to hearing confessions and preaching. In 1530, he

[5] *Vie du R. P. Gabriel Maria*, by Father Honorat Nicquet, of the Society of Jesus.

visited the Annonciades at Louvain. His reputation for sanctity had already preceded him. He was welcomed with great honour by the clergy, the magistrates and the nobles. During his stay in this community he cured a sick nun. In 1532, his weakness sensibly increased, yet he would again preach the station of Lent. As soon as he had finished his preaching he had to proceed to Rome, being Definitor General, to assist at the General Chapter. He therefore left Bourges on his way to Rome. He had scarcely a breath of life left in him, and yet on his journey he preached, heard confessions, received all those who wished to have a word with him or desired his advice. When he arrived at Rodez his strength suddenly failed. He was removed in all haste to the Annonciades of this town. Here Blessed Gabriel Maria was to end his saintly and laborious career, here he was to rest for awhile under the care of his pious daughters.

On the feast of St. Anne he said Mass for the last time, the following day he was only able to hear Mass and go to Communion. On August the twenty-seventh, after conversing with the religious who tended him, he went into his room to take a little food, but, forgetting to eat, he continued to speak of our Blessed Lady, and proposed six questions on the excellence and merits of Mary to those around him. When the religious had given their opinion, he wished to answer them himself, but strength failed him. Then, raising his eyes to Heaven, and making a last effort, he said with a feeling of inexpressible joy, " To-day I shall go and see the Blessed Mother of God, of whom we are speaking." He asked to be carried to his bed, began Vespers of the Blessed Virgin, and as he finished the last verse of the *Magnificat*, he slept peacefully in the Lord. At the same instant the whole room was filled with a celestial perfume. It was the twenty-seventh of August, 1532. The spiritual daughters of Blessed Gabriel felt deeply the great loss which had come upon them. Those who were around his bed were never weary of kissing his feet and his hands.

The people hastened to the monastery to venerate the remains of the blessed man whom our Lord already glorified by miracles. This was the beginning of public devotion to the servant of God by the faithful of Rodez. The different communities of the Annonciade also joined in rendering him the homage of their devotion, and celebrated his feast on the twenty-seventh of August, the anniversary of his death. This devotion has been kept up to the present day. It remains for us to speak of the right and title which makes this devotion lawful, and to prove that this devotion, begun a century before the Decrees of Urban VIII., has never since been interrupted, it has also received the sanction of Innocent X.

The precious remains of the blessed Father were provisionally placed in a chapel. In 1544, the church of the monastery being finished, the body of Blessed Gabriel, which was found to be in perfect preservation, was buried in it. In 1625, the Bishop of Rodez allowed the nuns to remove the remains of their venerated Founder from the common place of sepulture and to lay them in an honourable place in the church. One of Blessed Gabriel Maria's biographers says, "Considering the great treasure which they had in their church and having seen evident tokens of his blessedness, such as having themselves heard singing in the night, and seen candles and lighted tapers on his tomb, it seemed to them that God willed to make it known that it was not reasonable that this body should henceforth remain in the common place of sepulture, all the more because they were invited and pressed by all the other monasteries of the Order to remove it and lay it in some more honourable place.[6]" The body of the servant of God was therefore removed from his tomb, put into a reliquary and placed between the altar of the Annonciade and the nuns' grating, to be exposed to the veneration of the faithful.

[6] Abridgment of his life, in the history of St. Jeanne de Valois, by Louis d'Attichy, Bishop of Riez.

In 1642, Father Bernard Jourdain, Provincial of the Observance of Ancient Aquitaine, charged Father Peter Massebœuf, chaplain of the Annonciades of Rodez, to beg the Bishop to allow an enquiry into the miracles worked by the intercession of Father Gabriel Maria. In the letters of commission Father Jourdain states the existence of devotion to Blessed Gabriel. Mgr. de Corneilhan, Bishop of Rodez, appointed M. Solanet, Prior of Ceignac, to make the enquiry asked for. The Bishop wrote thus on this matter, "Father Massebœuf, religious of the Observance, has informed us that miracles take place constantly at the tomb containing the remains of Father Gabriel Maria . . . . 'for which reason they are honoured and venerated by the faithful . . . .'" Twenty-one witnesses were called and deposed on oath that they had been cured of various maladies by the intercession of the servant of God. The enquiry ended on July twenty-first, 1645. By the official report of this enquiry, we learn that the faithful used to burn tapers in honour of the blessed man and placed *ex votos* around his tomb. We also learn that his picture was exposed in the nuns' choir. In 1658, the Bollandists, in the life of Saint Jeanne de Valois, tells us that the Annonciades kept yearly the feast of the blessed Founder.[7] This is another testimony in favour of the perpetuity of the devotion to Blessed Gabriel Maria.

In 1681, the Provincial of the Observance of the Province of Touraine, Father John of Kirbec, under whose authority the monastery of the Annonciade of Bourges was placed, published for these religious, *The Rule of the Annonciade, with the Declarations on the Rule, the Statutes, and the Ceremonial.* In this book Father Gabriel Maria is given the title of *Blessed.* Added to the Rule and the Statutes, at the end of the book, are considerations for the fourth of February, feast day of the Foundress, St. Jeanne de Valois, and for the twenty-seventh of August, on which day the nuns kept the feast of

[7] *Acta Sanctorum.* February the fourth. Life of St. Jeanne de Valois.

their blessed Father. This is again a testimony in favour of the perpetuity of the devotion to Blessed Gabriel Maria. We may add that the Annonciades still keep the feast of Blessed Gabriel Maria on the twenty-seventh of August. They have Benediction of the Most Holy Sacrament on this day, but they do not say any office in his honour.

On the twenty-eighth of October, 1647, Innocent X. addressed a Brief to the Annonciades of Bourges in which he grants a Plenary Indulgence to all the faithful who shall visit their church on the feast of Blessed Gabriel Maria, to whom the brief gives the title of *Saint*. According to Benedict XIV., a concession of Indulgences made to a church on the occasion of the feast of a servant of God, suffices to authorize devotion to him. Blessed Gabriel Maria has therefore a two-fold title to the devotion which the Annonciades have to him, up to the present day, that of the Brief of Innocent X. and perpetuity, two titles which, according to the Decrees of Urban VIII., permit us to look on the honour paid to a servant of God as lawful.

Blessed Gabriel Maria was an admirable pattern of devotion to Mary. His life may be summed up in these two things, his love for Mary, and his faithfulness in imitating the special traits of the Mother of God. Let us learn from him to recite devoutly the *Ave Maria* and the *Magnificat*, and to repeat constantly, as an ejaculatory prayer, the most sweet Name of Mary.

The same Day.

Blessed Timothy of Montecchio. Priest.

[1444—1504.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

The annalists of the Order have left us few details as to the life of this blessed disciple of St. Francis. He was born of a good family, at Montecchio, a little town near Aquila, in the Abruzzi. Being desirous to escape from the dangers of the world, he entered, when quite young, among the Franciscans of the Observance. He made rapid progress in perfection, faithfully observed religious discipline, was assiduous in meditation on heavenly things. He excelled in the practice of humility, penance, in all religious virtues, and became a subject of admiration to all his brothers. So great were his piety and fervour when offering the Holy Sacrifice that our Lord favoured him with visions. Blessed Timothy fell asleep in the Lord at the convent of Ocra, in the diocese of Aquila, in the sixtieth year of his age. Pius IX. confirmed the veneration paid to him from time out of mind. (His feast is only kept by the Observance.)

September 1.

Blessed Isabella of France. Virgin.

[1225—1270.]

Of the Order of St. Clare.

Blessed Isabella was born about the year 1225. She was the daughter of Louis VIII., King of France, and Blanche of Castile, to whom God had granted such piety, intelligence, and fervour, as to be capable of rearing Saints even on the throne and in the midst of the allurements of a royal palace.[1] From her earliest childhood the young princess had been accustomed to prayer and had cherished an ardent devotion to our Lord and His Holy Mother. Their pictures were the playthings of her infancy. She imbibed with her mother's milk those principles of lively faith and burning charity to which France owes St. Louis. Her soul may be compared to a soil adapted by nature to the production of Divine fruit, and in which the teaching of Blanche took root with marvellous rapidity. While yet quite a child she

[1] The life of Blessed Isabella was written shortly after her death by Agnes d'Harcourt, who had been on intimate terms with her during her lifetime. She wrote it at the request of Charles of Anjou, King of Naples, and brother of the Saint. Sister Agnes had been maid of honour to Isabella at the Court, and followed her to Longchamps, of which monastery she was afterwards the third Abbess. This valuable biography, of which the manuscript was preserved at Longchamps, has been translated into Latin by the Bollandists and published in their last volume of the month of August. Rouillard, the Parliamentary lawyer, and Father Caussin, of the Society of Jesus, have handed down to us a somewhat detailed life of Blessed Isabella.

gave herself up to prayer, meditation, and other practices of a Christian life.

Not satisfied with the education usual to persons of her rank, she learned Latin, which she studied with so much diligence as soon to be able to read the Bible, and the writings of the Fathers in that language, as well as speak it, dictate letters, and, if need be, correct those which her chaplains wrote in her name. Besides this pursuit, she applied herself to the duties appropriate to her sex. She was expert with her needle, could weave silk and cloth of silver and gold, and do every kind of work. By this means she was enabled to give to churches ornaments made with her own hands, adorn the altars, and clothe the tabernacle in veils of precious stuffs. Thus did she honour Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament as well by the labour of her hands as by the devotion of her heart.

Our Saint carried the spirit of mortification to extraordinary lengths. She fasted three times a week, and her ordinary food was so meagre and stinted that she would have been unable, without special grace, to sustain her strength. She used to find means of sending the larger portion of the viands that covered her table, to the poor and the hospitals. She would keep silence during meals and pray inwardly, remaining, as it were, a stranger to the things of this world. Isabella was ever watchful to preserve a becoming recollection. She avoided frivolous amusements and was always on the alert to guard against any dissipation of mind. She was fearful of alienating God from her heart, by giving the world too easy an access to it, and therefore kept it closed as a sanctuary in which our Lord was to receive in silence her homage and adoration. Her whole recreation consisted in pious conversations, either with her brother, the king-saint, Louis, or with the ladies who attended her.

Isabella entertained the deepest respect for her brother, the king, and he on his part loved her with a true brotherly

affection. He bore with great reluctance the tokens of reverence which she paid him as her sovereign, and used to reprove her on this account, but was unable to restrain the humble and loving devotion of his sister. But in spite of her deep attachment to the king, on one occasion Isabella refused to yield to his desires. One day, Agnes d'Harcourt informs us, as she was engaged in making a cap, the king asked her for it to wear at night. "No," replied she, "I have determined to give it to our Lord, as it is the first one I have spun." "Well, my sister," returned Louis, "I shall ask you to spin another one for me." "Certainly," she answered, "if I make any more of them." And that very evening she sent the cap to a poor sick woman, whom she was wont to supply every day with food from her own table.

Not only did Isabella send plentiful help to the needy, but she also visited them in person in their sickness, ministered to their wants, and alleviated their sufferings by her tender sympathy. Her charity grew with her years, and next to the saintly king there was no one in the French court so eager to comfort the unhappy, so active in rendering them assistance, or so modest in distributing her alms. She was in truth worthy of being the sister of St. Louis. From the exercise of charity Isabella would proceed with edifying fervour to the contemplation of Divine subjects. To them, even after many hours of prayer during the day, she devoted a portion of the night. It was then she found that joy which the world, with all its splendour, cannot give. In these close communions with God, she laid the foundations of that sanctity which all admired in her. "A true mirror of innocence," says Agnes d'Harcourt, "a wonderful model of mortification, a rose of patience and self-denial, a shining lily of chastity, a copious fountain of mercy, she was a perfect type of every virtue."

A supernatural light infused into her a dread of the slightest imperfection. She used to examine her conscience

most scrupulously, reproached herself for most insignificant failings, and confessed them with many tears, punishing herself for them with rigorous penances. Agnes d'Harcourt tells us that she was full of respect for her confessor and obeyed him as if she were a nun. In the midst of her pious labours Almighty God tried Isabella by a severe and dangerous illness. She was then at Saint-Germain-en-Laye. Queen Blanche and Saint Louis were absent at the time, and only Queen Margaret, her sister-in-law, was near the holy sufferer. In vain did Margaret lavish on her the most tender and affectionate care. Her exertions were useless, and even the doctors were compelled to acknowledge the impotence of their skill. Blanche, on hearing of the danger of her daughter, immediately hastened to her bedside, but found that from Heaven alone could she hope for assistance. She prayed with great fervour, had prayers said, and soon a holy woman of Nanterre, to whose prayers she had specially recommended her sick daughter, told her that Isabella would recover, but that the world would no longer claim her as its own, for she would belong to God. Having recovered her health, Isabella returned with renewed zeal to her religious exercises and pious practices. She displayed even greater contempt for the vanities of the world, and entertained serious thoughts of entering religious life. Conrad, son of Frederic II., and heir-apparent to the Empire, was a suitor for the hand of the young princess, and Blanche and St. Louis had already begun to congratulate themselves on so advantageous a match. Innocent IV. himself, looking on this marriage as a means of establishing peace in Italy and the Papal States, was as eagerly desirous for it as the royal family, and wrote to Isabella urging her to give her consent (1224). The princess, however, informed the Pope of the vow of virginity she had made, and protested that she would consider herself more fortunate in being last among the virgins consecrated to God than first among the queens of this world. The Pope perceiving in

her evident signs of an extraordinary vocation, again wrote to congratulate and encourage her in the resolution she had made of having no other spouse than Jesus. Under these circumstances, says Agnes d'Harcourt, she begged and obtained from the Pope permission to have a religious of the Order of Friars Minor as her confessor. Some years later St. Louis left for the Crusade, and Isabella parted with great sorrow from the brother she loved so well. But she was able to resign herself and to understand the magnitude of the undertaking. He was going to uphold the cause of religion, and if necessary to give up his life in its defence. She devoted a large portion of her wealth to the support of a certain number of knights in the retinue of the king, thus taking her share in the work of that famous Crusade.

The news of the captivity of the saintly king, the death of one of her brothers at Mansourah, and the reverses of the Christian army, were sources of the deepest grief to both her and her mother Blanche. But faith triumphed in those truly heroic souls, faith was able to overcome the sorrow caused by all these unhappy events, and to give them the strength necessary to surmount it. The captivity of Louis came to an end, but alas! he was never again to see his illustrious mother. Blanche of Castile had gone to claim a crown surrounded by fewer storms than that which she had worn with so much glory in her own country. Isabella bitterly mourned the loss of her noble mother. It created an immense void in her soul, and never had she been better able to appreciate the virtues of that renowned queen. However, her brother Louis had returned from the Crusade, and he set an example of every virtue joined to the dignity of a king. He was fond of Isabella, and recognized her exceptional qualities, while he assisted and encouraged her in the way of perfection. But the love of a saint did not satisfy her, she yearned to sacrifice her life wholly and entirely to God, and to spend it far from the world in the peaceful seclusion of the cloister.

After consulting her confessor, Isabella determined to found a monastery for the daughters of St. Francis and St. Clare, whose holy lives excited general admiration. She disclosed her intention to the king who, after mature deliberation, gave his sanction to the work, and invited her to choose the site of the new building, himself undertaking the task of building it and providing for the wants of the nuns. This was in 1255.

The place chosen was Longchamps, on the outskirts of Paris, and the dedication "The Humility of our Lady," a name suggested by her love of Mary, and her most conspicuous virtue, humility. The Rule which St. Francis had given to St. Clare seemed to her somewhat too severe for the class of people for whom the seclusion of Longchamps was intended. Eminent men of the Franciscan Order, among whom was St. Bonaventure, were charged with the task of introducing some modifications, such as permission for the community to possess revenues and property. Pope Alexander IV., in 1258, confirmed this modified Rule, and on the completion of the building, about 1260 or 1261, the work of installing the new community was begun. The new nuns were ladies of high birth, and most of them belonged to the French Court. They had brought four nuns from the convent of the Clares at Rheims, to train them in the Franciscan Rule and expound its meaning. The royal family was present at their instalment, and St. Louis gave a discourse so edifying and so full of the spirit of God that his audience were moved to tears.

Isabella herself was clothed with the religious habit and professed in this monastery the Rule of St. Clare, as the legend of her Office expressly says. She discovered by experience that new modifications must be introduced into the Rule, and spoke to the king about it, who at once referred the matter to the Sovereign Pontiff. Urban IV. deputed Simon de Brie, his legate in France, to concede the wished for mitigations to the Observances of Long-

champs, and the Pope approved this Rule with the modifications to which it had been subjected. In 1264, at the instance of St. Bonaventure, the then General of the Order, Urban resolved to establish uniformity of Rule among all the Orders of Clares. He took the Rule given to St. Clare by St. Francis, and brought in very nearly the same modifications as those he had just approved of at Longchamps, and then commanded that this second Rule should be enforced in all the monasteries of the Order. Nevertheless some houses obtained leave to keep the first Rule, and received the name of "Poor Clares," while those who followed the Second Rule were called "Urbanist Clares." In the fifteenth century, St. Colette and St. Bernardine of Siena especially, again put the first Rule into operation in many monasteries which they had founded or reformed. Blessed Isabella must be included among the Urbanists, and she was in fact the first to obtain those dispensations with regard to poverty, of which the Urbanists have ever since availed themselves. But nevertheless Urban IV. and St. Bonaventure must be considered as the real promoters of this branch of Clares which has given a number of eminent saints to the Order, such as B.B. Cunegundes, Yolande, Matthia of Nazzarei, Margaret Colonna, Paula of Mantua, etc. Our Saint lived on for about nine years, in the holy abode of Longchamps, filling it with the sweet odour of her sanctity. On the twenty-third of February, 1270, at the age of forty-five, Isabella slept peacefully in the Lord, and at the same instant some of the nuns heard the songs of Angels and then a voice saying, "Her home has been founded in peace." On the first news of this sad event, Louis, who was at Tours, hurried to Longchamps, assisted at the obsequies of his blessed sister, and comforted the holy community. Soon miracles began to bear witness to the sanctity of the noble princess, and in 1521, Leo X. gave his sanction to devotion being paid to her, and to the celebration of her feast. In 1637, the nuns of Longchamps

obtained permission from Urban VIII. to exhume the remains of the saint and place them in a reliquary, for the veneration of the faithful. During the terrible times of the Revolution the monastery of Longchamps, like all other religious houses, was destroyed. There is nothing now in that spot to recall the memory of the sister of St. Louis. The Revolution was incapable of recognizing the true glories of France. Part of the relics of Blessed Isabella are preserved in the parish Church of St. Louis, on the island in Paris, and are exposed for veneration every year on his feast.

(The feast of Blessed Isabella is observed on this day by the Observance as a Double, and by the Capuchins as a Semi-Double. Among the Conventuals it is celebrated on the third of September, as a Double.)

SEPTEMBER 3.

Blessed John of Perugia, Priest, and Blessed Peter of Sasso, Lay brother, Martyrs.

[1231.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor.

JOHN OF PERUGIA and PETER OF SASSO FERRATA were thought worthy by St. Francis to form part of the first missionaries of the Order in Spain. These two brothers had lived apart, in two little cells, in the small town of Ternel. Their humility, their poverty, their perseverance in prayer, soon won them the esteem and veneration of the townsfolk. They preached the Word of God with such zeal that it bore much fruit.

About the year 1231, their longing to extend the kingdom of God, and perhaps to claim the palm of martyrdom, made them determine to go to Valencia, which was then under the power of the Moors. As soon as they arrived there

they began to preach the Christian Faith in public. Their preaching drew upon them the notice of the king, Azot, a bitter enemy of the Christians. This prince ordered the two preachers to be brought before him and gave them their choice between apostacy or death. Their choice had already been made from the moment they crossed the boundary of the infidel kingdom. They were condemned to be beheaded, but before their execution they prayed, most fervently, for the conversion of the Moorish king, who had condemned them to death. An interior voice assured them that their prayers would be heard. They then cheerfully laid down their lives. It was on August the twenty-ninth, 1231. Their precious bodies were taken back to Ternel, and God glorified their tomb by many miracles.[1]

The prayer of the martyrs was soon heard. A few years later, James I., King of Arragon, became master of the town of Valencia. King Azot, touched by Divine grace, embraced Christianity. The Moorish prince, from being a persecutor, became a humble disciple of Jesus Christ. He gave his own palace to the Friars Minor for a convent, saying to them, "It was I who killed your brothers from Ternel, when I was an infidel. I regret this crime with all my heart, and I desire to make reparation for it. I offer you my royal palace for a convent, and I think you will accept it with more willingness, knowing that it is consecrated by the blood of many martyrs, put to death by myself and my ancestors." A convent, therefore, was established on the spot where these two blessed martyrs had died, and a church was erected in their honour. The Pope, Clement XI., approved the honour paid to them.

(Their feast is kept by the Friars of the Observance and the Capuchins on this day, by the Conventuals on September the first.)

1 The history of these blessed martyrs is given us by Bartholomew of Pisa, St. Antonin, Wadding, Jacobille, etc., and by Father Marcellin of Civezza, in *The History of Franciscan Missions*. T. I., p. 184.

September 4.

St. Rose of Viterbo. Virgin.

[1235—1252.]

Of the Third Order.

About the middle of the thirteenth century, many and great troubles afflicted the Church. The German Emperors, the natural defenders of the Holy See, became her oppressors. Frederick II., himself a pupil of the Papacy, and owing his Imperial crown to the Pope, became the most powerful enemy of the Church to whom he had sworn fidelity by the most sacred oaths. His army invaded the States of the Church, seized on the patrimony of St. Peter, and drove the Sovereign Pontiff into exile. But God can play, as it were, with the power of man. A little child, of the name of Rose of Viterbo, was to oppose the proud Emperor. The most feeble was to confound the most strong.

Rose was born at Viterbo, in the States of the Church. From her very infancy she was most remarkable for grace and holiness. Her heroism began at such an early stage of her life, as if she had had a presentiment of how short that life was to be.[1] The holy names of Jesus and Mary were the

[1] All the annalists of the Order and many biographers have written the life of St. Rose of Viterbo. This most remarkable life contains several points which have been much questioned by her historians. A very trustworthy Jesuit, Father Andreucci, published in Rome in 1750, a critical life of St. Rose, which is most valuable. Mencarini has given a life of the Saint equally remarkable as a critical and learned work. Wadding and the Bollandists may also be consulted. We only give here, in our life, uncontested facts or those which are admitted by the most authentic authors.

first words uttered by the baby lips. She could hardly walk before a holy instinct taught her to go into the most retired and quiet spots to pray. At two years old, Rose was never tired of hearing about the eternal truths from her parents, taught her in simple words. When she could walk she only left the house to go to church, and when there her extreme modesty and recollection was the admiration of every one. On returning home she would repeat the sermons she had heard, and that with such a natural and childlike grace, the hardest hearts were touched.

At an age when most children spend their days in play, Rose retired into solitary places, knelt before God, and there, out of human sight, she prayed to be preserved from the dangers of the world and from the slightest touch of sin. To these prayers she added the most severe penances. She wore a hair-shirt and gave herself long disciplines, not indeed to combat the revolt of nature, but for the pure desire of suffering with her crucified Spouse. Our Lord inspired her also with a great love of poverty. The child would only wear a coarse woollen frock, with bare feet, uncovered head and rough hair.

Though Rose had little compassion on herself, she was full of compassion for the suffering of others, especially for the poor. She was unwearied in her efforts to help them, seeing in them our Divine Master. During a famine which came upon Viterbo, the saintly child deprived herself of food to give it away to those who had none. Our Lord deigned to show, by a miracle, how He accepted the charity of His child. One day, when she went out of the house, carrying some bread in her apron to give to the poor, she was met by her father, who asked her what she was carrying. Pale and confused, the child opened her apron. It was full of splendid roses, making the whole air sweet. Heaven was pleased to favour this pure heart by frequent miracles.

Like St. Francis, she lived in sweet familiarity with the

birds. These timid creatures flew round her, spoke to her in their language, rested on her arms, receiving food from her hands day by day. One of her companions, on one occasion, was going to a fountain for water. She knocked the fragile vessel which she carried, and it was broken into many pieces. Rose was touched by her friend's tears, and began to pray, then she picked up the pieces and they were instantly joined together, so that no trace could be seen of the breakage.

Rose was only three years old when our Lord manifested her sanctity in a wonderful way. One of her maternal aunts had just died. The body was resting on the bier, and the family were weeping round it, praying for the dead. Deeply moved by the sorrow of her parents and relations, Rose went close to the coffin, raising her eyes to Heaven, she prayed silently. Then placing her little hand on the body, she called her aunt by her name. The dead woman opened her eyes, rose up and returned thanks to God and embraced her holy little niece. The wonder of the miracle was soon known through the entire town. Many were converted to a good life by it, it strengthened the faith of others, and the little child was venerated by all. At seven years old, Rose felt herself drawn to greater solitude. God was preparing her for the great work He designed for her. She chose a little cell in her father's house, there she spent all her time in contemplation, macerating her tender body by unheard of penances. She prayed most of all for the Church, which was undergoing a violent crisis. At eight years old, the life of penance had so weakened her that she had a dangerous illness, lasting more than a year, threatening often to end in the grave. To console her, our Lord favoured her, in the midst of her sufferings, with singular graces, ecstacies and heavenly delights, the foretastes of Paradise itself.

On the vigil of St. John Baptist, the Queen of Heaven appeared to her, surrounded with light. She came to her

bed, embraced her tenderly, told her to be clothed in the habit of the Franciscan Third Order, to combat vice among her fellow citizens, without respect of persons, and to fight the cause of God and the Church without ceasing. She prepared her also for suffering great persecutions. The Blessed Mother of God blest her and disappeared, leaving Rose in a trance of joy. Cured, body and soul, by this heavenly visitor, she rose from her bed to carry out the orders she had received. She was ten years old when she was clothed in the habit of Penance.

Now she had become a daughter of St. Francis, she returned to her cell to thank her Divine Spouse with tenderest gratitude. Our Lord showed Himself to her and made her understand that as she had now espoused herself to Him in the order of Penance, it was that she might be drawn nearer to Him in His sufferings. This holy colloquy deepened in her heart the love of suffering and she multiplied her privations and mortifications. Our Lord on the Cross became the one object of her thoughts. In the contemplation of His sufferings all the faculties of her soul were concentrated, all the affections of her heart. Once, when she was meditating on these mysteries, our Lord appeared to her, hanging on the Cross, His hands and feet nailed, His Head crowned with thorns, His Face bruised, His Bones dislocated, His Body bathed in blood running from the wounds. At this sight, she shook with grief, she cried out, amidst her tears, "O my Jesus, who has reduced Thee to this terrible state?" Our Lord replied "It is My love, My deep love for men." "But," said the Saint again, "Who has pierced and torn Thee on this wood?" "It is sin," replied our Saviour. "Sin!" cried Rose, "It is I then who am so cruel, I, a miserable sinner, who am causing Thee all these torments." Then, transported with a holy indignation against herself, she shed torrents of tears, tore her hair, lashed, and tortured herself.

This vision left Rose with one burning desire, the salva-

tion of souls. She took a cross in her hand and went up and down the streets of her dear city, begging the people to do penance. They crowded round her. It was a strange sight, this child, in her coarse habit, with a cord round her waist, speaking with inspired voice. Those who looked on to mock soon had their hearts softened with compunction for their sins. For four years this mission was carried on among the inhabitants of Viterbo. She preached in the public squares against vice and all sorts of sin, she explained to her hearers the truths of faith against the errors of heretics and schismatics, corroborating her words by numerous and well chosen passages from the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers, so that even learned people were full of admiration. The town of Viterbo had been taken from its rightful sovereign, the Pope, by the impious tyrant, Frederick II. Rose, contrary to all human considerations, defended most warmly the rights, both spiritual and temporal, of the Holy See. She reproached the partizans of the Emperor Frederick with taking the part of an excommunicated prince, showing them how criminal was his conduct, and how just the cause of Innocent IV., the supreme Head of the Church.

Her words were often strengthened by startling miracles. The sick, in great numbers, came to solicit her prayers, and returned cured. When the holy child preached in the public places, she was so small that she had to stand on a high bench or stone, so as to be heard by the immense crowd. Several times the stone on which she stood was raised in the air, and she was seen sustained there, by a miracle, the crowd silent with astonishment. When the discourse was ended the stone softly descended to the ground. During the day, she went to the public places, the work shops and private houses, preaching the Word of God, helping the poor, consoling the afflicted, exercising all the works of mercy and charity. At night she retired to her cell, there, instead of resting, she fell on her knees, passing

the night in prayer and mortifications. Her Divine Spouse often appeared to her in a human form, enlightening her with His counsels, filling her heart with fresh love and joy and heavenly blessings. The town changed marvellously under this strange missionary. Impiety and license gave place to virtue, religion became honoured, faith once more ruled the lives of the people. The authority of the Church was respected, many who had opposed the Holy See turned back and proclaimed their allegiance to her, the heretics themselves, who had begun to listen to her, through curiosity, were captivated, one by one, by the charms of her voice and the evident signs of her sanctity. Convinced at last by her reasoning they ended by accepting the truth, and became practical Christians and devout Catholics. Before long there were hardly any heretics left in Viterbo and very few partizans of the Emperor.

She blessed and thanked our Lord Who had shewn mercy to her dear neighbours, by guiding them to the path of salvation when so many souls had been near perishing. But she was still sad, for there were many precious souls, the noblest of the followers of Frederick II., who refused to be converted. The holy child, pertinaciously worked for their conversion. She spoke to them in public, exposed their tricks, answered their sophisms, confounded their arguments and reduced them to silence in the presence of a large crowd, who applauded the victory of the little Saint. Ashamed and irritated with their defeat, these partizans of the Emperor became even more furious and bitter, seeing that the young girl was exposing their ignorance, and undermining the power of their master by making the people of Viterbo return to their faith and, in consequence, to their allegiance to the Pope. They warned her, under pain of the heaviest threats, to cease from her public preaching. Rose was not frightened for an instant, she only declared that she must fulfil her mission from heaven, in spite of threats of prison, or exile, or death itself. This firmness

exasperated them yet more. They would have seized her at once but they feared that the people, full of veneration for their little Saint, would rise in a mass to avenge her death, which would ruin the power they desired to maintain. They therefore contented themselves with calling upon the Prefect to place her in exile, on the grounds that she excited the people to rebellion against the Emperor, in favour of the government of the Sovereign Pontiff. Therefore Rose and her parents were banished from Viterbo. Rose is believed to have been in her fifteenth year at this time.

They set forth on their journey in the midst of winter, on a dark and cold night, snow had fallen and had obliterated the path. Rose had only her tunic to cover her, and her bare feet were bleeding from the stones and thorns. She lifted her heart to God in adoration of His holy will, and spent all her care on encouraging and supporting her parents, reminding them of our Lord's promises to the persecuted for justice' sake. At last they arrived at Soriano, a little town, a few leagues from Viterbo. Our Lord had warned Rose that they were to stay at this place, iu order that she should exhort the inhabitants to do penance. She therefore began her preachings there, as she had done at Viterbo and with the same fruit. On December the fifth, 1250, as she was fervently praying for the Church, an angel announced to her that the Emperor Frederick was dying and that peace would be restored to the Church. This news filled her with joy and the next day she joined the inhabitants of Soriano in an act of thanksgiving. In a few days the persecutor of the Church was called to his account before God, and Innocent IV., who had taken refuge at Lyons, was reinstated in the Pontifical States. On this occasion the inhabitants of Viterbo turned out of their town all the Imperialist parties and replaced on their buildings the Papal banners of their true Sovereign.

Rose, having fulfilled her mission at Soriano, heard that

the neighbouring town of Vitorchiano was under the influence of a sorceress, who, in the pay of the late Emperor's government, had persuaded the people to separate from the Holy See. They had given up the practices of religion, and lived like heathens. Our Lord inspired her to go there to preach to the people. She left Soriano amidst the tears of the population, who felt as if an angel had been in their midst. The inhabitants of Vitorchiano had heard of the marvels worked by Rose. Many of them had heard her preach, both at Soriano and Viterbo. When they heard of her arrival at their own town, the news soon spread to the villages round. Multitudes hurried in from all sides to hear her, and her words bore so much fruit, that the town was transformed in a few days. But Rose feared that when she was gone the sorceress would plunge them again into error, so she desired above all, to convert the poor woman herself, who was in the power of the devil. Rose had recourse to all the means inspired by charity. She held public discussions with her, and exposed her errors, but these efforts failed to overcome her obstinacy. The Saint redoubled her prayers and her mortifications and our Lord inspired her to make a decisive test of the truth of Catholicity, in the presence of the whole town. She had an immense pile of wood prepared in the public square, and she begged the priests of the town to ring the fire bell. The people ran in crowds. Rose announced to the assembly that she was going to make her last and greatest effort for the conversion of the sorceress, the only soul in the town who remained obstinate in her disbelief. Then she ordered the fire to be lighted. When it was well alight and the flames were rising towards heaven, Rose calmly went near, with a firm step she put her feet on it, and climbed to the top of the pile. There she remained standing, her arms crossed on her breast, and her face turned up lovingly towards heaven. From her fiery pulpit she sang the praises of God. The flames, when they reached her feet stopped

short as if in respect, and though they surrounded her, she was untouched. The astonishment, and enthusiasm of the people, may be imagined, at this marvellous sight. For three hours she remained in the midst of the flames. Not a hair of her head was touched, nor was her habit singed. The multitude praised God as they recognized the sanctity of His faithful servant, and thanked Him for this manifestation of her virtue. The poor sorceress herself, resisted no longer. She threw herself at the feet of Rose, confessed her faults in public and implored the intercession of all, that she might obtain mercy. Her conversion was sincere, after having given up her errors and repared the scandal she had given, she spent the remainder of her life in doing penance and in the practice of virtue.

Rose then left Vitorchiano, amidst the regrets of the inhabitants, who wanted to follow her on her road, but when she had gone a short distance from the town, she begged them to return, and after blessing them, she and her parents, continued their journey alone. She went to several towns and villages around Viterbo, working many miracles, converting sinners, strengthening the good, healing discords and encouraging the faithful in love of the Holy See. When she had satisfied her soul in this evangelical work, she and her parents, turned their steps to Viterbo. On the news of her return, the inhabitants of the town went out in crowds to welcome her, praising God for giving back to them one to whom they all owed so much.

The mission of Rose was at an end. She only thought now of how she was to put into execution, a plan she had long made, of separating herself entirely from the world, to live alone with God. She went to the monastery of "St. Mary of the Roses." The Abbess declined to accept her. "It does not please you to receive me duriug my life," said Rose, smiling, "perhaps you will be more willing after my death." She retired to her old cell in her father's house, where her time was spent in contemplation and

penance. She only left it to hear Mass and to go to confession. Some young girls, touched by her example, wished to place themselves under her direction. With the approval of her confessor, Rose took a small house near the monastery of St. Mary of the Roses, where she gathered her little flock together to lead the religious life under the Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis. Their holy life was the edification of the whole town.

But the nuns of the neighbouring convent, who lived on alms, objected to the new foundation coming so near them, as they, too, were living on the alms of the faithful. They obtained a Brief from Innocent IV., objecting to any foundation within the radius of two miles from their monastery. The Bishop sent for Rose to inform her of the Holy Father's decision. She received it with deep respect and submission. She replied "Since our Divine Master deigns to manifest, through His Vicar, that we should please Him more by living each one alone, I think I can answer for the dispositions of my dear companions, that they will willingly separate at once." Rose returned again to the cell in her father's house to continue the same life of prayer and penance. Her days on earth were nearly over. Her nuptial banquet was being prepared above. Just before the end, she turned to her good parents and her dear companions to say some consoling words. "I am dying," she said, "but I die with joy, for I desire to be united to my God. Live, so as not to fear death. For those who live well in the world, death is not frightening, but sweet and precious. My dear father, my beloved mother, I am going from you, but my soul will always be united to you, and, once in the presence of God, I shall pray for you to enjoy the happiness after which I am sighing at this moment." Then turning to her companions, she said, "I leave you in charge of Jesus my Spouse. I beg you to advance each day in virtue, for this only will please your celestial Spouse. Among all the virtues, I recommend especially, the love of God. O

love! O love! How cold are they who feel no ardent love. I also recommend to you, humility. Unhappy are they who are not humble. Humility! Humility! O holy, O most holy humility!"

As she gave her last sigh, her lips pronounced the names of Jesus and Mary. They were the goldem key to open heaven to her. She died March the sixth, 1252. St. Rose was seventeen years old and a few months. She was in figure rather below the usual height, her face was so pure and holy that it made people love to look on her. She had naturally a pink and white cemplexion, which became very pale after her long and severe fasts and mortifications. Her eyes were brilliant, her features delicate and refined, and there was a modest dignity in her manner. It was a miracle how so delicate a person could have endured the austerities she practised.

St. Rose was first buried in the parish church, but she had announced that after her death she would be received at the convent of St. Mary of the Roses. She appeared three times to Pope Alexander IV. who was then at Viterbo. and ordered him to have her body placed in that convent. A tomb was therefore prepared, and the holy body, marvellously preserved, was solemnly transferred there on September the fourth, the day chosen for her feast. It is in this church that her incorrupt body now lies, after the lapse of six centuries.

Miracles were wrought in numbers at her tomb, to the joy of the faithful. Pope Alexander IV. would have enrolled her in the calendar of the Saints, had not the labours and troubles of his Pontificate been too heavy for him to attend to it. Many years passed before the solemn decree proclaimed the sanctity of this great servant of God. The miracles were innumerable, and her cause was taken up by Calixtus III. in 1456. Her life was examined with great care, it was proved that, at her intercession, the dead had been raised to life, the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the

paralyzed, the sick, of all kinds, had been cured, captives had been restored to liberty, the shipwrecked had been saved from death. During a fire in 1357, the church of the Poor Clares, which contained the body of the Saint, was destroyed. The vestments covering her body were burnt to a cinder, the holy body alone was respected by the flames, and remained as beautiful as on the day of her death. It was in 1457, that Pope Calixtus published the decree of her canonization. Many Popes, emperors, kings and princes, and numerous other people, at various times, have visited her tomb to pay her honour and to implore her intercession with our Lord. (The feast of St. Rose is kept on this day as a Double of the Second Class by the Friars of the Observance and the Capuchins, as a Great Double by the Conventuals.)

September 5.

Blessed Gentile, Martyr in Persia.

[1340.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor.

This zealous promoter of the glory of God, Blessed Gentile, was born at Matelica, a little town in the March of Ancona, of the noble and ancient family of the Finaguerra. His childhood was most pious and pure, and as soon as he was old enough he said goodbye to the world and put on the livery of the poor man of Assisi. When his noviciate was over he applied himself to the study of the sacred sciences with great success, was promoted to the priesthood, and then sent to the convent of Mount Alvernia. The touching associations of the holy mountain had a great effect upon Gentile and spurred him on to walk in the footsteps of his Seraphic Father. He spoke little, loved solitude, and devoted his time, to watches, fasts, penitential austerities,

and contemplation. Struck by his holy life, the religious raised him twice to the office of Guardian. By his amiable qualities, the blessed man won the hearts of all his brothers and inspired them with a holy ardour for perfection and the faithful observance of the Rule. But this bright light was not intended to remain always hidden under a bushel. God inspired him to devote his life to the extension of His kingdom and the salvation of souls. Blessed Gentile was docile to the call of God and he began his apostolic ministry in Italy. His preaching, backed by his austere life, untiring zeal, and striking miracles, brought back crowds of sinners to the paths of virtue.

The Seraphic Patriarch sought the grace of martyrdom in Egypt, but he sought in vain. Blessed Gentile, too, often turned his eyes to those inhospitable shores, sitting in the shadow of death. His heart was thirsting for greater battles, His superiors saw that these desires came from God, and the fervent apostle, tearing himself away from his dear solitude at Alvernia, sailed for the East. Egypt, Arabia, and Persia were to be the successive scenes of his labours. Before starting for these distant regions, he went to say goodbye to his father. The latter was very old and infirm, and complained bitterly that his dear son was forsaking him in his declining years. "Father," replied Gentile, "I promise you, before God, that I will come back and assist you in your last moments and perform the last offices for you." Consoled by this promise, the old man blessed his son and let him go.

On his arrival in the East, Gentile met with an obstacle which seemed insurmountable. Notwithstanding all his efforts and all his good will, he could not learn the language of the country. Discouraged by this want of success, the humble religious prepared to return to Europe, when our Lord Jesus appeared to him, and bestowed on him the gift of tongues to evangelize these pagan nations. Blessed Gentile then set to work to evangelize Egypt, Arabia, and

Persia with a zeal which nothing could hinder. Our Lord confirmed his mission by miracles, and an immense number of pagans became Christians. The holy missionary neglected nothing which could strengthen the faith of his dear neophytes. He prayed unremittingly, fasted continually, the love of Jesus Christ made him scorn all earthly things as dust beneath his feet. He was a faithful observer of evangelic poverty, and would take nothing from the alms given him but what was strictly necessary for that day's support, he gave away the remainder to the poor. The pagans, themselves, were struck by his angelic life as well as his miracles. Many times when he was preaching to the crowd, a number of birds would come round him, and seemed, by their example, to be inviting his hears to attend diligently to the words of the man of God.

The gift of prophecy was also possessed by Blessed Gentile. Mark Comaro, envoy extraordinary of the Republic of Venice to the King of Persia, meeting the holy missionary begged for his company across Arabia. On the way Comaro fell ill and was, in a few days, at his last gasp. Blessed Gentile foretold that he would soon be well again, and also that vicissitudes and trials were awaiting him, and that he would one day be Doge of Venice. Everything happened as the servant of God predicted. In passing near Mount Sinai, Blessed Gentile wished to visit the tomb of St. Catharine on this mountain, and stopped there some days with the Venetian ambassador. One day he suddenly disappeared from among his travelling companions, his absence lasted eight days, after which he reappeared in the midst of the wondering pilgrims. Mark Comaro pressed him to say where he had been, and what he had done during his absence. The Blessed man could not resist telling him that, to fulfil a promise he had made, he had been to Italy to assist his father in his last hour, that he had officiated at the funeral, and taken part in a family meeting to arrange his affairs. Mark Comaro, on his return to Italy, went to

Matelica, and there found out that the presence of Blessed Gentile in his native place perfectly coincided with the time and duration of his disappearance from Mount Sinai. He gave witness later on, as to this fact and other miracles which the servant of God worked among the pagans.

Blessed Gentile travelled through Arabia and arrived in Persia which was to be the last scene of his apostleship. He evangelized all the kingdom, baptized more than ten thousand pagans, went as far as Trebizond and Sarmastro, and ended his apostolic career at Toringia where he sealed with his blood his faith in Christianity. His biographers have not related the circumstances of his martyrdom, which took place on the fifth of September, 1340.[1] The precious remains of Blessed Gentile were removed to Venice, to the church of the Friars Minor. Pius VI. has sanctioned the veneration paid from time immemorial to the blessed man. (His feast is kept on this day by the Observance and the Conventuals.)

[1] For the life of Blessed Gentile the following authors may be consulted, Bartholomew of Pisa, Wadding, Mazzara, Henrion (*Histoire des Missions Catholiques*, L. I., chap. xii.), Father Marcellino of Civezza, in his history of the Franciscan Missions. T. III., p. 650.

September 6.

Blessed Vincent of Aquila, Lay Brother.

[1504.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

This blessed man, a native of Aquila, in Italy, was brought up by his parents in the fear of God. From an early age he gave promise of the eminent sanctity to which he was one day to attain. Being desirous of serving God with greater perfection, he took the habit of St. Francis among the Friars Minor of the Observance, at the convent of St. Julian, near his native town. This holy community, founded by Blessed John of Stroncone, was soon impregnated, so to say, with the perfume of his virtues. Vincent fled from the world to seek solitude and to devote whole nights to prayer and contemplation, and our Lord rewarded him by frequent ecstacies and raptures. He treated his body to the most severe penance, taking for food only a little bread and some raw herbs mingled with wormwood. Deep humility, angelic purity, charming simplicity, unchangeable patience in the midst of the sufferings, labours, and wrongs which he underwent, evangelic poverty, such were the virtues which shone in him with a marvellous brightness. Backed by such an example, his preaching had a wonderful efficacy in leading souls to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

God vouchsafed to bestow upon His faithful Servant the gift of miracles and of prophecy. He foretold to the king of Sicily that Charles VIII., King of France, would, one day,

seize upon his states. He also predicted events, which came to pass, to other princes. After a life more angelic than human, Blessed Vincent fell asleep in the Lord, at the convent of St. Julian, on the seventh of August, 1504. Heaven testified to his merits and credit with God by innumerable miracles wrought at his tomb. The *cultus* paid from time out of mind to Blessed Vincent of Aquila, was confirmed by Pius VI. (His feast is only kept by the Friars Minor of the Observance.)

September 9.

Blessed Seraphina Sforza. Widow.

[1434—1478.]

Of the Order of St. Clare.

Seraphina came into the world, it is believed, at Urbino, about the year 1434.[1] Her father was Guy Antony of Montefeltro, Count of Urbino, and her mother was Catharine Colonna, niece of Pope Martin V. In baptism she received

[1] Among the writers about Blessed Seraphina must be mentioned Mariano of Florence, in his manuscript chronicle of St. Clare, chap. 22, Mark of Lisbon, Gonzaga, Wadding, Cimarelli, in his chronicle published in 1621, and republished at Naples in 1680, Peter Antony of Venice, and Mazzara, in their Franciscan Legendary, Jacobilla, Hueber, Algezira, Tielmans. The Bollandists published a manuscript life which was given to them in 1661, by the Poor Clares of Pesaro. Father Augustine Gallucci, Friar of the reformed Observance, of the Province of the Marches, wrote a life of Blessed Felicia Meda and of Blessed Seraphina, published at Ingolstadt, in 1637, and republished at Venice in 1692. Father Bonucci, S.J., published both these lives at Rome in 1724. A very remarkable biography of Blessed Seraphina, written in the last century by Mgr. John Baptist Alegiani, Protonotary Apostolic, and dedicated to Benedict XIV., was reprinted in 1855, at the Printing Office of Anesio Nobili of Pesaro.

the name of Sueve. Her pious parents died when she was quite young, and she was sent for to Rome by her maternal uncle Prince Colonna, to be brought up in his family. There nothing was wanting to her education. In the Eternal City she imbibed a lively faith in the truths of religion, her soul expanded more and more to the sweet inspirations of piety, her heart became imbued with the love of Jesus, whilst her mind was enriched with all the knowledge needful for a person of her rank.

About the year 1448. Sueve was given in marriage to Alexander Sforza, Lord of Pesaro, and Grand Constable of Sicily. This prince had married firstly Constance Varani, daughter to the Duke of Camerino, and had a son and daughter by her, named Constant and Baptista. Sueve undertook to bring up these two children, and she loved them as tenderly as if they had been her own. After some years of close union with her husband, the Lord of Pesaro was obliged to take up arms and go to the help of his brother Francis Sforza, Duke of Milan. When he departed, he left the government of his small states in the hands of his good wife. The war and, in consequence, the absence of the prince was prolonged for six years. During this time, Sueve made herself beloved by her gentleness and the abundance of her alms, at the same time that she made herself respected by her great virtue and wise government.

The war ended in the success of the Duke of Milan. Alexander returned to Pesaro in 1459. Dating from this period, a series of bitter trials began for the handmaid of God, which would be almost beyond belief were it not that any excess may be expected from a man who allows himself to give way to his passions. To the hardships of war, all at once succeeded luxury, self-indulgence and idleness, and at last the prince gave himself up to a life of open scandal. He let himself conceive a criminal attachment for a lowborn woman, named Pacifica. More sensible to the offence committed against God than to the injury done to herself,

the pious princess poured forth her prayers and tears unceasingly at the foot of the Cross. She tried at first to reawaken better feelings in her husband, speaking with all gentleness, and, always with unfailing patience, of the duties of religion. Far from recalling the prince to a better mind, he was only still further angered, and setting aside all sense of decency, he went so far as to instal the wretched woman in his palace, giving orders that she should be honoured and obeyed as mistress of his house, and that Sueve, his lawful wife, should be treated like a servant. The Saint was spared neither insults, outrages, nor ill-treatment. The prince went so far as to attempt her life. Three times he tried to poison her, another time he seized her by the throat and attempted to strangle her, but our Lord ever watched over his faithful handmaid, and inspired her with a patience which nothing could alter. She was content to pray and to return good for evil on every occasion.

The life of the pious princess was a daily martyrdom. But the worse she was treated, the more she redoubled her prayers, her austerities, her spiritual exercises, so as to draw from them strength to suffer all and thus obtain the conversion of her unfortunate husband. But our Lord was reserving fresh trials for His handmaid. The prince, more and more led away by his passion, became unable to bear the sight of her whose whole life was the strongest condemnation of his own conduct. One day he flew at his wife, beat her, dragged her by her hair, and turned her out of his palace, bidding her go and shut herself up in the convent of Poor Clares. Sueve asked for admittance at the Monastery of the Holy Sacrament, and found a shelter among the holy daughters of St. Clare who inhabited it. The hatred of her wicked husband followed her even there. Guards were placed at the doors of the monastery, they received orders to intercept all letters, and to prevent Sueve from having any intercourse with the outer world. The exile of this virtuous, good and accomplished princess was

a great grief to her stepson Constant, who loved her as his own mother, and to the people of the Court as well as the whole town. Everyone wept over her fate and openly blamed her persecutors.

The holy princess wore her secular dress in the monastery, but from the very first day she kept all the observances of religious life with great courage. Her life was one incessant prayer. She was constantly to be found on her knees before the tomb of Blessed Felicia Meda and seemed almost unable to tear herself away. By her prayers and tears she besought God for the conversion of her husband and his wretched accomplice.

Her relations the Colonnas, having been informed of the ill-treatment to which she had been subjected by her husband, wished to find out the truth of the case, and sent messengers to Sforza to take him to task. The prince wished to justify himself, and invented the blackest calumnies against the handmaid of God, declaring that she had retired into the cloister to hide her shame. The messengers were hard to convince of such a charge against one whom they knew to have been so virtuous, but Sforza offered to give undeniable proof of it and if need be to make her confess it. He sent to tell Sueve of his intended visit and threatened to burn down the monastery unless she acknowledged herself to be guilty. Then he went to the monastery and sent for his victim to come to the grate in the parlour. He had witnesses by who could hear the conversation without being seen, and one of them was appointed to write down what he heard. The handmaid of God came to the grate, trembling. Sforza spoke to her at first with pretended gentleness, exhorting her to bear her seclusion with patience as it was after all a just punishment for her crime. He then questioned her, asking if it was not true that on such and such a day and in such and such a place he had not himself surprised her in an act of adultery. The handmaid of God was in great perplexity. If she said she was innocent

of the crime imputed to her, she would expose all the community to the anger of the tyrant, if she acknowledged herself guilty, she would not be speaking the truth, and would be going against her conscience. Sueve, therefore, decided to keep silence. "You see," then said the prince to his witnesses, "she does not dare deny in my presence the crime which I saw her commit." And he left the convent triumphing in the thought that he had convinced them all of his wife's guilt.

The princess was presently informed of the object of her husband's visit and of his wicked plot to deceive the messengers from her family. Distressed beyond measure at the thought of the dishonour which would be reflected on her own family, she went and threw herself at the feet of her crucifix and with tears commended her cause to the Saviour of mankind. Help from Heaven was not long in coming. The Crucifix inclined towards her, the God of Calvary spoke to the afflicted soul of His handmaid, words of ineffable consolation, and that there should be no doubt of the Divine intervention, the crucifix has ever since kept the same position.[2] Sueve's unworthy husband hardened his heart and plunged deeper and deeper into crime. He wanted to force his wife to become a nun and to give him back her wedding ring, as if it was in his power to break a tie formed by God Himself. He even had recourse to threats. But Sueve, supported by heavenly consolations and by the advice of the Abbess of the monastery, was not to be alarmed. She declared that she would joyfully embrace religious life if she felt herself called thereto by God, but that she would never yield to violence. The prince then redoubled his threats, he would indeed have gone to the

[2] This crucifix which was placed in the sacristy had belonged to St. Bernardine of Siena, who used it during the forty years he was on the missions. The Saint gave it to Blessed Felicia Meda, foundress of the monastery. The Poor Clares of Pesaro kept it with the greatest care. It was carried in procession in times of public calamity.

greatest lengths, if God had not, a second time, had pity on Sueve. Mary, the Consoler of the afflicted, appeared to her, strengthened her and made her see in the life of the daughters of St. Clare the haven where she would find calm and rest after the storm. Sueve, overcome with joy, put on the habit of St. Francis, taking the name of *Seraphina*. She showed herself worthy of the name by her angelic fervour. Taught and purified by suffering, she soon attained to a high degree of virtue. Her obedience, her humility, her love of prayer, made her a living example to the community. There was no kind of penance that she did not undertake joyfully, either to expiate the slight sins of a life spent almost wholly in the practice of virtue, or, above all, to draw down on sinners, and especially on her enemies, the graces of conversion which they needed.

Writers tell us that the wretched Pacifica, arrayed in the ornaments which had belonged to Seraphina, actually dared to visit her in her monastery, and in an insolent manner gave her needlework to do as if she had been her servant. Seraphina, far from feeling the least resentment, welcomed her always with the utmost charity, but in secret before God she never ceased offering up her prayers, tears and penances for the conversion of the two guilty ones. For some time longer the prince of Pesaro seemed to live only to fill up the measure of his crimes. But Seraphina's prayers had become all-powerful with the Heart of God, and she ended by winning the grace of repentance for him, followed by that of the partner of his guilt. At last, Alexander Sforza, ashamed of his excesses and conquered by grace, came to humble himself at the feet of his victim. He wept over his misconduct, and for the rest of his life he edified those whom his past behaviour had scandalized for too long, by his works of mercy and his repentance. The monastery of St. Clare had always a large share in his liberality. When his death came in 1473, his son Constant, who succeeded him as Lord of Pesaro, continued to be-

friend this community because of Blessed Seraphina, for whom he had always had the affection of a son.

Seraphina was elected Abbess of the monastery in 1475. For four years she did her utmost to guide her daughters in the path of holiness. Religious observances were endeared to them by her example, and she taught them how to taste the sweetness of the yoke of our Lord. She not only had a care for spiritual things but she looked after the temporal interests of the convent. She restored the monastery and added to it considerably, so as to meet all the wants of the present as of the future. At last the time arrived when she was to go and reap in the joys of eternity what she had sowed in tears. Formed in the first instance by the virtues which had sanctified her youth, then added to in beauty by her most heroic patience, and, lastly, enriched by all the merits she had acquired through the austerities of religious life, her crown was ready. She received it on the eighth of September, 1478. Seraphina was born to Heaven on the day when this earth saw the birth of Mary, the sweet Consoler of the afflicted, whom she had always loved with a most childlike love. Immediately after her death, her body gave forth a delicious perfume which lasted for three days, filling the chapel of the monastery where she was exposed. When, some years afterwards, her body was exhumed to give it a more honourable burial place, it was found intact and quite incorrupt. This miraculous incorruption continues to this day. Many miracles have since been wrought at her tomb, and Benedict XIV. has approved the veneration paid to her time out of mind. About the year 1810, at the time of the first suppression of the Religious Orders in Italy, the bodies of Blessed Seraphina and of Blessed Felicia Meda were removed to the Cathedral of Pesaro. (The feast of Blessed Seraphina is kept on this day throughout the Order.)

September 11.

Blessed Bernard of Offida, lay brother.

[1604—1694.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor, Capuchins.

Bernard was born in the neighbourhood of Offida, in the province of the Marches, in the year 1604. His parents took every pains to bring him up virtuously, and their exertions were blessed by God. The child's docility, gentleness, and early piety, betokened a chosen soul. At seven years old he was employed to keep sheep. He had the facility and attraction for prayer which is the gift of the Holy Spirit to pure souls. He would invite the other shepherds to come and pray with him, saying the rosary with them, or he would speak to them on holy subjects. On Sundays, he spent all his time in the churches, praying fervently and doing his best to prepare himself for the Sacraments. It was at the foot of the Altar that he heard the call of God, *which gave joy to his youth.* The edifying life of the Capuchins made him think of joining that branch of the Seraphic Order, and he realized this project in the year 1626.

After his profession the blessed man was sent to the convent of Fermo, and given the care of the sick. There he edified his brothers by his fervour, his zeal for perfection and his great charity. Sent successively to different communities, Bernard left behind him everywhere the sweet odour of Jesus Christ. He had reached sixty years of age, when he was appointed questor to the convent at Offida.

The mere sight of him occupied in this employment was a silent sermon which drew souls to God. He went on his way with eyes cast down, with a modest countenance, his charity meekness and angelic look inspiring reverence in everyone. Whilst asking for temporal alms, Bernard gave spiritual alms, a thousand times more valuable, in return. He consoled the poor and afflicted, and awoke repentance in the hearts of those who were living in sin. Above all he had a special gift for settling disputes and restoring peace in families. When the growing infirmities of the venerable religious no longer allowed of his performing the office of questor, his Superiors gave him that of porter. This was a fresh opportunity for him to practise charity towards his neighbour. The poor came to him in crowds, he assisted them with all the tenderness of a saint. Those in trouble came to confide their sorrows to him, he comforted them with kind words, which he seemed, so to say, to go and seek in Heaven. The ignorant especially were the objects of his zeal, he would teach them with untiring patience, and prepare them for receiving the Sacraments.

The high opinion of his merits, the result of his holy life, was so well established, that people came quite simply to ask miracles of him, with the certainty, confirmed by experience, that they would obtain what they asked. One day a poor mother brought her little child who was dangerously ill, and put it into the arms of the Saint, begging him to cure it, but the child immediately breathed its last. Wild with grief, the poor woman cried out that Brother Bernard had killed her child, and seeing that he was about to go away, she seized hold of his habit, and said to him, "I will not let you go until you have given him back to me alive." The holy man was much touched and shed tears together with her. Then going into the church, he knelt before the altar of St. Felix of Cantalice, placed the child on the altar, and addressed the Saint, saying with beautiful simplicity, "This is the moment to help me, my good

St. Felix." He then prayed for a few minutes, and the child was restored to life and health.

It seems as if something would have been wanting to the perfection of this great servant of God, if he had not had to bear with humiliations and calumny. Providence did not forget to give him his share of trials. Some of his brothers were displeased at his solicitude for the wants of the poor, and the trouble which he gave himself to relieve them. Complaints were made to the Provincial. It was represented that he was devoid of discretion in the way he distributed alms, his prodigality, they said, did harm to the community. The Provincial called the blessed man and gave him a severe reprimand before the whole community. The servant of God received the rebuke in silence, and gave an example of humility to all. God rewarded the great merit of Bernard, by the gift of miracles, insight into hearts, by ecstacies and raptures. The Blessed Virgin, the love and consolation of all the saints, vouchsafed, one day, to appear to him and assure him that his sins had been forgiven.

Blessed Bernard of Offida reached the age of ninety years, his life had been spent in the practice of every virtue. Our Lord called to Himself this good and faithful servant in the month of August, of the year 1694. Many miracles have since been wrought at his tomb, and Pius the IV. solemnly beatified him on the nineteenth of May, 1795. (His feast is only kept by the Capuchins.)

September 12.

Blessed Apollinare and his companions. Eighteen religious of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance, and twenty-seven Tertiaries martyred in Japan, from the year 1617 *to the year* 1632.

We have already spoken of the arrival of the Franciscans in Japan, under the leadership of St. Peter Baptist, of the countless works which they accomplished there, and of the glorious martyrdom which crowned their apostleship in the year 1597.[1] Of the eleven religious of St. Francis who were then in Japan, six sealed with their blood the Faith of Jesus Christ. FF. Ruiz, Rodriguez, Ribadeneira were taken captive in the port of Nangazaqui, with Brother John Zamora, and were banished by order of Taicosama and brought back to Manilla. Father Jerome of Jesus who, by command of St. Peter Baptist, had hidden himself so as to be able to help the Christians, was taken at Nangazaqui and also brought back to Manilla. A short time afterwards, Father Jerome of Jesus, who was inconsolable at having been unable to take his place in the martyrdom of his companions, was again sent to Japan by his superiors, with Father Louis Gomez. As soon as they arrived on Japanese soil, the latter was thrown into prison. A price had been set on the head of Father Jerome of Jesus, and he had to hide himself until the death of the Emperor Taicosama, which took place in September, 1598.

Daifousama or Cubosama, his successor, at first favoured

[1] See the life of St. Peter Baptist and his companions on February the fifth.

Christianity. The Church in Japan enjoyed a period of peace for about twenty years, during which time an immense number throughout the empire came over to the Faith. The blood of the first martyrs had become the seed of Christianity. Father Jerome of Jesus was summoned by the emperor, sent as ambassador to the viceroy of the Philippines, and loaded with favours by Cubosama, who took him into his own palace. The emperor said to him, "Have no fear, you can wear your habit again, I will protect you." The holy religious, availing himself of the credit which he enjoyed at Court, travelled through a part of Japan, raising churches everywhere to the glory of the True God, and bringing into the Fold a great multitude of heathen. God confirmed his preaching by the most striking prodigies. He delivered a great number who were possessed by the devil, among others a niece of the emperor. He disputed publicly with the bonzes and completely confuted their errors. He was the first to preach the Faith in the province of Quanto and at Jeddo, which has since become the capital of the empire. He reopened the convent at Meako, founded by St. Peter Baptist. The holy religious, by his virtues, his poor, austere, and penitential life, had won the esteem and respect of the heathen themselves. The emperor had wished to provide, himself, for all his needs, but the servant of God begged to be allowed to live on the alms of the faithful, which greatly edified the prince and all his court. Furious at the progress the Gospel was making, the bonzes tried to set the emperor against the Franciscans, but all their efforts to lessen his affection for these religious were unavailing. Father Jerome of Jesus came to the end of his laborious career towards the end of the year 1601, in the convent of Meako, amidst the tears of all the Christians. His companions, Father Gomez and Father Peter of Burgillos, announced the sad news to the emperor, who appeared much grieved and promised to continue his protection towards them.

The most splendid hopes were raised by these promises, and the Provincial of Manilla sent eight religious to Japan, headed by Father Rodriguez, the old companion of St. Peter Baptist, as Commissary. He was afterwards recalled because of his great age and infirmities, and was succeeded by Father Didacus Bermeio, ex-Provincial of the Philippines. Other missionaries followed, and the Order soon possessed seven convents in Japan, which were erected into a Province. In 1611, their number was increased to ten, with nine hospitals and thirty-four missionaries. The Jesuits evangelized the western part of Japan, while the Franciscans were established in the eastern part of which they had been the first apostles. But the Holy See did not consider that the Franciscans and the Jesuits sufficed to cultivate these vast Provinces, and the mission of Japan was opened to all the religious Orders. Clement VIII. was the first to do this, in his Bull *Onerosa*, published in 1600, he revoked the Brief of Gregory XIII., which reserved to the Jesuits the mission of Japan. In 1608, Paul V. published, in favour of the Mendicant Orders, the Bull *Sedis apostolicæ*, which revoked once more the Brief of Gregory XIII. and certain restrictive dispositions of the Bull of Clement VIII., and gave to all free access to this fine mission. The Dominicans and the Augustinians then came to Japan, to give their zealous help. Such was the marvellous triumph of the Faith, that by the year 1614, nearly two million of Christians were to be found in Japan, that is to say, a sixteenth part of the whole population of the empire. Some kingdoms, such as Arima, Omura, and Bungo, were entirely converted to Christianity.

Notwithstanding the relative peace enjoyed by the faithful during several years, there were always local persecutions stirred up by certain governors who were hostile to Christianity, so that the Church in Japan never ceased to send martyrs to Heaven. But in the year 1614, the Emperor Cubosama, repenting of his first good dispositions towards

Christianity, began a great and bloody persecution, which was carried on by his successors, and only ceased when the splendid Christendom of Japan was utterly ruined and destroyed. The cause of this new persecution was as follows. The bonzes, who were inveterate enemies of Christianity, endeavoured by every means in their power to act on the mind of the emperor, and threatened him with the wrath of the gods of the empire if he delayed to destroy the Christian religion. Certain of the emperor's favourites lent their influence to the wicked suggestions of the idolatrous priests, and also brought forward the reasons of state which had served as a pretext for the first persecution under Taicosama. On the other hand, the Dutch Protestants, wishing at any price to supplant the Spanish and Portuguese in their trade with Japan, calumniated them to the emperor, especially the missionaries who were mostly Spanish. They represented to him that these foreign priests, under the pretext of preaching the Gospel, were only preparing the way for the conquest of Japan by the King of Spain. They added that Catholic priests had been proscribed in England, in Holland, and in other Western states, for having deterred their followers from giving the obedience due to their lawful sovereign. And, as the emperor hesitated to break with the Spanish and Portuguese because of the commercial advantages which he derived from them, the Dutch offered to furnish him with the same European produce in greater abundance, of better quality and at a lower price. The Dutch Protestants, prompted by mercantile greediness and their hatred of the Catholic Church, renewed their treacherous manœuvres with the Japanese sovereign and ended by succeeding in their hateful designs.

Notwithstanding the edict of banishment, a certain number of missionaries, Dominicans, Franciscans, Augustinians and Jesuits were able, by hiding themselves, and joyfully running the risk of martyrdom, to remain in Japan to encourage and support the Christians amid this terrible

and bloody struggle. Several of those who had been expelled returned secretly. Others came to rejoin them and to share their heroic and perilous ministry. Then were to be seen, throughout the length and breadth of the empire, Christians treading in the steps of their masters in the faith, braving death with a courage which only finds a parallel in the early ages of the Church. The multitude of martyrs was countless. Princes of the blood, wealthy women, tender virgins, old men of great age, innocent boys, children of four and even of three years old. Some were bound to stakes and burnt at a slow fire, others were beheaded. Some were horribly mutilated and cut to pieces. Others were hung over the crater of a volcano and died after being tortured for a long time in the sulphurous and boiling waters. Some were plunged, in the midst of a most severe winter, in a frozen pond and endured the most cruel and lingering death. Several were crucified with their heads downwards, while others were left, consumed by hunger and misery, to breathe their last in a loathsome dungeon. All showed the greatest valour in the fight, and proved themselves worthy disciples of their crucified Lord.

From among all these countless Christian heroes, the acts of *two hundred and five* have been collected. These were put to death, having confessed the faith, between the year 1617 and 1632. Their *Cause* was set on foot at Rome, and, after the usual proceedings, they were beatified by Pius IX. on the twenty-seventh of July, 1867. These blessed martyrs belonged to the Orders of St. Dominic, St. Francis, St. Augustine, and to their Third Orders, to the Society of Jesus, and to the secular state. The Order of St. Francis claims, for its share, forty-five, of whom eighteen belonged to the First Order and twenty-seven to the Third Order. The following notice of our blessed martyrs is arranged in chronological order.[1]

[1] Among the writers who have mentioned our blessed martyrs, may be cited Father John Francis of St. Antony, Father Dominic Martinez, and

Blessed Peter of the Assumption, Priest, of the Order of Barefooted Friars Minor of the Observance.

THIS blessed man was a native of Cuerba, in the diocese of Toledo, in Spain. He joined, when quite young, the Barefooted Alcantarines of the Province of St. Joseph, and made such rapid strides in perfection that as soon as he was a priest he was given the direction of the noviceship. He crucified his body by fasts, haircloths and disciplines. A portion of the night was given up by him to contemplation, whence he gathered extraordinary graces. In 1600, Brother John of Zamora came to Spain to enlist missionaries for the Philippines and Japan. Blessed Peter, who was then Guardian of the convent of Nunoz, got leave to start with fifty of his companions for the Philippine missions. Blessed Louis Sotelo and Blessed Apollinare Franco were among the number and were afterwards to become also martyrs. Peter came to Japan in 1607, and learnt the language with a facility that had something supernatural about it. For some years he was Guardian at Nangazaqui. Peter practised great mortification, very high prayer, and was full of apostolic zeal. He evangelized the kingdoms of Figen and Omura. His days and a great part of his nights were spent in catechizing, instructing, baptizing, and fortifying the Christians, and in

especially Father Felix of Huerta, historiographer of the Franciscan Province of the Philippines. Father John of St. Antony, in his chronicle of the Franciscan Province of St. Paul, Father Stanislaus Melchior, Chronicler General of the Order, in his unpublished volume of Annals. M. Léon Pagés, in his History of the Christian Religion in Japan. Father Louis Tasso, of Fabriano, Minor of the Observance of the Province of the Marches, in his splendid history of our blessed martyrs, *Storia di quaranta cinque Martiri giaponesi dell' Ordine di san Francesco, beatificati dal Sommo Pontefice Pio IX. il di 7 luglio* 1867. *Roma* 1871. Lastly, the Apostolic Processes for the beatification of these servants of God, have been the most valuable and reliable source of our information.

converting the pagans who, owing to his zeal, entered the Fold of Jesus Christ in great numbers. It would often happen that he went without food so that he might not interrupt the work of his laborious ministry.

In 1614, when the edict of persecution was promulgated, the servant of God was obliged to leave his convent, but he continued to work at the salvation of souls in his secular dress. He went from town to town and from village to village encouraging the Christians and administrating the Sacraments to them. Many had hidden themselves in caves and clefts in the rocks to escape the persecution, the holy missionary managed to discover them and brought them both the spiritual and temporal help of which they had need. He was in the vicinity of Nangoia, some leagues from Nangazaqui, when he heard that the governor, an apostate Christian, was making active search for him. The Christians begged him to fly, or to take at least certain measures which prudence would seem to dictate. Peter, knowing that some Christians murmured because they said the preachers exhorted them to martyrdom whilst they knew how to save themselves, either by flight or by hiding themselves, answered those who pressed him to fly, "My children, do not be uneasy about my fate, think, rather, of your own salvation. If I am taken, what greater joy could I have than to suffer and to die for Jesus Christ? We sometimes fly and hide ourselves during times of persecution, because we are a very few priests and religious here for so large a number of Christians, but if God permits me on this occasion to gather the palm of martyrdom, without any imprudence on my part in exposing myself to death, it is not right that I should take to flight, and I ought to give you an example of perseverance and courage."

Having made this speech, Blessed Peter determined to remain with his flock, and set to work to hear confessions. He was engaged in this sacred ministry, when a messenger came to him from the governor and invited him to come to

Nangoia, under the pretext that he wanted to be reconciled to the Church. The Christians, fearing treachery, entreated him not to go, but he replied that he was in the hands of Providence, and he went. As soon as he arrived in the town, he was seized, bound with chains and taken to the prison of Omura. When he was arrested, he kissed his crucifix and exclaimed, "O my God, how can I have deserved, poor sinner as I am, to be bound in chains for Thy love, when Thou didst refuse this happiness to our Father St. Francis?" The wife of the gaoler of the prison having confided to him that she was a Christian, he was enabled by her means to write to Blessed Apollinare Franco, then Commissary of the Franciscans in Japan, and to procure all that was needful for saying Mass in secret. He offered It up every day in his prison while shedding tears of tender emotion. Then he spent the rest of the day in praying and praising God.

On the first of May there arrived a holy religious of the Society of Jesus, Father John Baptist Tavora, who was to be the companion of his captivity and of his martyrdom. The two servants of God threw themselves in each other's arms, and shed tears of joy while congratulating each other on their mutual happiness. The daily life of these two holy religious was all spent in prayer, penance, and in holy converse to prepare themselves for the grace of martyrdom. On the twenty-first of May, feast of the Holy Trinity, our Lord revealed to Blessed Peter, while he was saying Mass, that the hour of their glorious departure was at hand. The following morning he said to his blessed companion, "To-day we shall celebrate our last Mass, let us offer It with much fervour and devotion for the apostate governor and for the Japanese." About midday, it was notified to them that they were to be executed that very day. The two future martyrs sang the *Te Deum* to thank our Lord for the grace which they had so greatly desired. They took a prolonged and severe discipline, confessed to one another with many tears, and spent the evening in prayer. Both refused the

meal which was offered them, and, about sundown, they were told to start for the place of execution.

Blessed Peter of the Assumption held his crucifix in his hand, at the foot of the crucifix was fastened the Rule of St. Francis tied with his discipline. Blessed John Baptist Tavora also held his crucifix and his diurnal. On the way they sang the Litanies of the Queen of Martyrs. From time to time they preached to the crowds who surrounded them, and exhorted the Christians to perseverance. A heavenly light, in the form of a golden banner, appeared in the sight of all the train and preceded them to the place of martyrdom. As soon as they arrived at the place of execution, Blessed Peter of the Assumption held up his hand to impose silence, and began to speak to the multitude. The officers appointed to preside at the execution found the discourse rather long and gave signs of impatience. Blessed John Baptist of Tavora, with sweet simplicity, made a sign to the preacher to stop, and he, with still greater simplicity, stopped short. The two martyrs embraced, knelt with their hands joined and their eyes raised to Heaven, and the executioner cut off their heads. This was on the twenty-second of May, in the year 1617. The children of St. Francis and of St. Ignatius having been the first apostles of Japan, God willed to join them in this second martyrdom, as He had joined them in the first sacrifice, on the Calvary of Nangazaqui.

After the execution, the Christians hastened to gather up the relics of the holy Martyrs. The sacred remains were placed in separate coffins and buried on the place of martyrdom. Two lights were often to be seen during the night over their grave. The faithful flocked there in pilgrimage and many miracles were wrought. This martyrdom gave fresh courage to the Christians, many pagans embraced the faith, and several apostates were converted. Ten days later, Blessed Navarrete, Provincial of the Dominicans, and Blessed Ferdinand of St. Joseph, Provincial of the Augus-

tinians, were beheaded in the neighbouring island. The governor, meaning to annihilate all remembrance of the four martyrs, had the bodies of Blessed Peter of the Assumption and Blessed John Baptist Tavora taken up, and Blessed Navarrete put into the coffin of the latter, and Blessed Ferdinand of St. Joseph into the coffin of Blessed Peter of the Assumption. The two coffins containing the remains of the four martyrs were then closed, heavy stones were fastened to them and they were thrown into the open sea. God seemed thus to hallow the brotherhood of the four Orders which were then evangelizing Japan. The Christians came from Nangazaqui with three hundred boats, and during three months made vain efforts to recover the bodies of the holy martyrs. Six months afterwards, one of the coffins appeared all of a sudden, floating on the waves, and was cast on shore by the tide. It was that of Blessed Peter of the Assumption and Ferdinand of St. Joseph. The bodies were found to be intact and clothed in their habits, they were taken to Nangazaqui and placed under two altars. The truth of this prodigy, attested to by witnesses, was accepted by Pius IX., in a Decree of the twenty-sixth of February, 1867. The body of Blessed Peter of the Assumption was removed later on to Manilla and placed in the church of the Order.

Blessed John of St. Martha, Priest, of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

This holy Martyr was born in the neighbourhood of Taragona, in the province of Catalonia. At eight years old he was placed among the choristers of the Cathedral at Saragossa. There he studied Latin, and was also specially remarkable for his musical talent. A little later on, he was admitted as a singer in the Cathedral of Zamora. But seeing the dangers which surrounded him in the world, he went to the Friars of the Observance of the

Province of St. James, and begged to received the habit of St. Francis. Blessed John was faithful to the grace of his vocation. He gave himself up wholly to the work of his perfection, and soon became a finished pattern of religious virtue. When he had become a priest, God inspired him to devote himself to the apostolate of the heathen, and his Superiors, to whom he opened his mind, recognized in his wish the marks of a call from God, and gave their consent. The servant of God then started for the Philippines, under the guidance of the venerable Sebastian of St. Joseph, who was taking with him thirty Franciscan missionaries. Several of these fervent religious were to give their lives for Jesus Christ. The venerable Sebastian, himself, was martyred in 1610, at Tagolande. Steps were taken at Rome for the Cause of Beatification of this indefatigable apostle, who was the first martyr in the Moluccas.

On his arrival in the Philippines, Blessed John of St. Martha asked to go on to the missions of Japan. But, on account of his remarkable cleverness in music and singing, his Superiors kept him for another year, and gave him the office of organist and choir master. Blessed John opened a school of music of more than four hundred pupils, to whom he taught singing, the organ, and different other instruments. He soon formed disciples capable of succeeding him, and, in the year 1607, he was allowed to depart for his dear mission of Japan. During ten years he exercised his apostleship in that country, and successively evangelized the provinces of Fuscimi, Arima, and Omura. When he arrived n Japan he was placed at the head of the mission of Fuscimi, and, like a true apostle of Jesus Christ he was indefatigable in the work of the salvation of souls. He was a great lover of holy poverty, always wearing a very poor habit all covered with patches, he went barefoot without sandals in the most severe weather. His great virtues earned the veneration of all the Christians and even the pagans themselves.

As soon as the edict of persecution was put forth, in 1614, Blessed John was exiled from Japan, but he soon returned, and, disguised in Japanese dress, he travelled over the provinces of Arima and Omura, where the persecution was raging furiously. Full of courage and intrepidity, the holy missionary visited the Christians in their houses, encouraged the wavering, reconciled apostates, administered the Sacraments everywhere, celebrated Mass daily, sometimes in one place, sometimes in another. At night he retired to some lonely mountain-side and took his rest in the cleft of a rock. His ministry was as fruitful with the heathen as with the Christians, and he converted them in great numbers to the Faith of Jesus Christ. We must mention among many others, the conversion of the maiden Catharine of Siquimi, who professed the Rule of the Third Order, taking a vow of virginity. Like her illustrious patroness St. Catharine of Alexandria, she was versed in sacred and profane science, and sustained public discussions with the bonzes, completely refuting them. She was beheaded for the faith in 1627, and carried off the twofold palm of martyrdom and virginity. Her name is not to be found in the last Decree of Beatification.

The governor of Omura, out of respect for the sanctity of Blessed John of St. Martha, had not dared to disturb him in the exercise of his ministry, but he could not prevent his arrest, which took place by the express command of the Emperor, on the twenty-fourth of June 1615. He was taken to the prison at Meako, brought before Safioyé, prime minister of the sovereign, and a most bitter persecutor of the Christians, who asked him how he had dared to stay in Japan notwithstanding the decree of expulsion. "I remained," replied the brave confessor of Jesus Christ," that I might teach you the way of eternal life, that I might undeceive you, and that you should leave off persecuting the Christians. You think to prevail, but you make a great mistake, God will know how to protect His own, and will

condemn their persecutors to eternal punishment. And you, Safioyé, the most cruel of all, remember that you are growing old, and that you have already one foot in the grave. The blood of all the Christians that you have shed, cries for vengeance against you. Do you think that the God Whom they adore is deaf or blind? you are strangely mistaken. He sees all, hears all, He is the Creator of all things. Do not imagine that everything ends in this world for man. Do not imagine that there is no God, because you see Christians persecuted, and the wicked, on the contrary, in the enjoyment of pleasures, honours, riches, as you yourself have been up to this time. God waits, and in His own good time He will give to each one what he deserves, to the just the reward of their virtues and their sufferings, to the wicked the chastisement of their crimes. After having tasted every enjoyment, spent your life in satisfying your passions, in heaping up treasures, in seeking honours, in feeding your ambition, in raising yourself to the position which you occupy by your tyranny and cruelty towards the Christians, you can only expect in the other world eternal punishment. The Christians, after a few days of suffering here below, will enjoy eternal happiness in the next life. And you—you will be damned and cursed for everlasting, with all those who follow your hateful example."

Safioyé, on hearing these words, spoken with apostolic freedom, was terrified and overcome with dread. He gave the prisoner into the hands of the governor of Meako, who was favourable to the Christians. The governor promised to give Blessed John his freedom on condition that he would no longer preach the Faith, and that he would leave Japan. "I did not come to Japan to leave it again," replied the confessor of Jesus Christ, "but to teach the way to Heaven to the Japanese. If it is true that you are kindly disposed towards me, allow me to remain in this country so that I may open a church in honour of the true God, since there are so many temples dedicated to false divinities. I have

made up my mind, I shall never of my own free will leave this empire. The governor was astonished at the boldness of his speech, and, being unable to favour him otherwise, gave him his choice between prison and banishment. The servant of God chose prison, for, besides the hope of martyrdom, he trusted to find a new field for his zeal. He was therefore thrown into prison among thieves and murderers. What he had to suffer from these wretches is almost incredible. They abused and ill-treated him, dragged out his hair, and stamped on his bruised limbs. The holy confessor wrote as follows to Father Louis Gomez. "God has sent me here to teach me what suffering is, up to the present I was ignorant of it. The hardened heathen who surround me ill-treat me with such fury, that I have several times been left for dead on the spot." After three years of imprisonment and untold sufferings, the confessor of Jesus Christ saw the day dawn of his last combat. While he was being led to execution, he preached Jesus Christ and then sung the *Te Deum*. Arrived at the place of martyrdom, he prayed for his persecutors, then raised his eyes to Heaven and bent his neck to the axe of the executioner. This was on the sixteenth of August, 1618, he was forty years old. Some portions of the remains of the blessed man, which were stolen away by the Christians, worked several miracles.

The acts of this martyrdom were written by Father Louis Gomez, Friar of the Observance of the Province of Andalusia, who himself gave his life for Jesus Christ, at Osaca, on the sixth of June, 1634, but his Cause was not set on foot, the canonical enquiry not having been able to be made. Blessed John of St. Martha has left us an account of the persecution in Japan. He wrote sermons in Japanese, an explanation of the catechism, and a refutation of the errors and superstitions of Japan. During his captivity he composed a Mass to music, which he sent to Manilla shortly before his martyrdom. During the year 1622, more than a hundred and twenty martyrs were burnt or beheaded. A

certain number of these were included in the Process of Beatification. In the course of this year, the Order of St. Francis sent to Heaven two bands of martyrs who have been beatified. The first martyrdom took place on the tenth of September, 1622, and the second on the twelfth of September. The first band included Blessed Richard of St. Anne and Blessed Peter of Avila, priests, Blessed Vincent of St. Joseph, lay brother, of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance. Also Blessed Leo Satzuma, a Japanese ecclesiastic in Minor Orders, a Tertiary and catechist of the Franciscan Fathers, Blessed Lucy of Fleites, a Japanese widow of eighty, the hostess of Blessed Richard of St. Anne, and a Franciscan Tertiary. These worthy and courageous disciples of St. Francis were some of those included in the *Great martyrdom* which took place on the tenth of September on the holy mountain of Nangazaqui, which had been already watered with the blood of our first martyrs. It was called the great martyrdom, because of the number and the position of those who were put to death. Twenty-five were burnt alive and thirty were beheaded. Among them were some Dominicans, Franciscans, and Jesuits.

Blessed Richard of St. Anne.

This blessed man was born in the year 1585, in the village of Ham in the diocese of Liège. His parents were in poor circumstances, but they were good and fervent Catholics and instilled the principles of solid piety into their son. At four years old he was carried off by a wolf, but, through miraculous intervention, he was found safe and sound by his mother who had invoked the protection of the holy grandmother of our Lord. Hence the name of St. Anne which he took in religion. At nineteen, after a childhood spent in innocence and piety, the blessed man came to beg the favour of becoming a child of St. Francis among the Friars of the Observance of the

convent of Nivelle in the Province of Flanders. He took the habit as a humble lay brother. He became remarkable for his deep humility, his love of holy poverty and his great austerities. While he was porter of the convent at Nivelle his great modesty edified every one. That he might keep himself continually in the presence of God, he watched over his tongue with scrupulous care and only broke silence when obedience and charity made it a duty. Notwithstanding his fatiguing occupations, he got up every night to assist at Matins. Father Anglebert, his confessor, declared that for a long time he was awakened every night by his Angel Guardian who, about eleven o'clock, knocked gently at the door of his cell and said in a low voice, "To Matins, Brother Richard, to Matins." At the sound of this soft voice, the good religious immediately rose and went down to the choir, accompanied to the door by the Heavenly Spirit, who then vanished from his sight.

In 1606, Blessed Richard obtained leave from his superiors to go to Rome. He met there Brother John of Zamora, who had come to Europe to take Franciscan missionaries out with him to India. The presence of this fervent missionary, the conversations which he had with him, re-awoke in his soul the desire of his childhood, of going some day to evangelize the heathen. Meanwhile, the Minister General of the Order, Father Arcangelo of Messina, in reply to the wish of Pope Paul V., chose fifty religious for the missions of Japan. Blessed Richard requested the favour of being admitted among the number, and set sail with them for the Indies. After a prosperous voyage, the missionaries landed in the Philippines, in the month of May, of the year 1611. The great virtues of the servant of God were appreciated by his superiors, and they wished to raise him to the priesthood, but it required an express precept of obedience to overcome the resistance of his humility. Blessed Richard was promoted to the priesthood at the age of twenty-six. His theological studies were rapidly made,

and so successfully that he seemed to have received infused science.

Blessed Richard was sent to Japan in 1612. Two years after, he was banished by the Decree of proscription and obliged to return to the Philippines. Though grieved by this disappointment, the blessed man did not give up his first project, and constrained by the desire to shed his blood for Jesus Christ, he returned to Japan with Blessed Francis Galvez, who was also himself to win the palm of martyrdom. For several years, Blessed Richard worked with untiring zeal to convert the pagans, to strengthen the new Christians in the faith, and to raise up again those who had wavered. No obstacle could stop him when the glory of God and the salvation of souls were concerned. He found his way into the prisons in disguise, to console and encourage the martyrs, and often accompanied them to the place of execution. Blessed Richard exercised his apostolate in the neighbourhood of Nangazaqui, with Father Peter of Avila and Brother Vincent of St. Joseph, who were to be the companions of his martyrdom.

Blessed Peter of Avila.

He was born at Palomera, in the diocese of Avila, in old Castile, and took the habit among the Barefooted Friars of the Province of St. Joseph, where he acquired a great reputation for sanctity. He was sent to the Philippines with thirty Franciscan missionaries under the guidance of Brother John of Zamora. Thence he went on to Japan, in 1619, in company with several of his brothers, among whom was Blessed Vincent of St. Joseph, lay brother, who was attached to him as catechist.

Blessed Vincent.

He was born at Ayamonte in Spain, about the year 1597. He went to Mexico, and took the habit there among

the Barefooted Friars of the Province of St. Didacus, founded by St. Peter Baptist. He accompanied Blessed Louis Sotelo to the Philippines, and thence went to Japan with Blessed Peter of Avila, whose apostolic labours he shared. These two religious were betrayed and given up by an apostate. The wretched man knew the retreat of Blessed Peter of Avila, and came to ask him to hear his confession. The Father told him to go and prepare and then to return. But the traitor went and informed the governor, who sent his satellites to seize the two religious. They were bound, and conveyed to the prison of Nangazaqui, then transferred to that of Omura, where Blessed Apollinare Franco, Commissary, and some other religious of the Order were confined. Before starting for Omura, the two religious were able to put on the holy habit, and all along the way, Blessed Peter of Avila preached the Faith of Jesus Christ. Blessed Richard, informed of the capture of his two companions, bethought himself to try and convert the apostate who had betrayed them. He therefore went to seek him and endeavoured to make him understand the enormity of his crime. But far from being touched, the wretch denounced the servant of God to the governor. Blessed Richard was lying sick in the hospitable house of the venerable Lucy of Fleites, when he was arrested and taken to the prison of Nangazaqui to join Blessed Peter of Avila.

Blessed Leo Satzuma.

He was catechist to Blessed Richard, and was a Japanese ecclesiastic in Minor Orders. He was absent when his Father was arrested, as soon as he was informed of it, he hastened to Nangazaqui to give himself up to the governor and to join his master. The astonished governor tried vainly to induce him to give up the Faith. Then irritated by his resistance he threatened him with death. "Since," he said, "you do not wish for freedom,

nor riches, nor honours, nor life, you shall have prison and death, like him whom you call your father and whose fate you ask to share. This is but simple justice, for you have made war on our divinities." "I thank you," answered the brave confessor, "I thank you for the honour that you do me. Yes, it is an honour and glory for Christians to suffer and to die like their Crucified Master, true God and true Man, Who died for the salvation of the world. You will see that I shall be brave under the fire, and you will have the means of judging which is the most powerful, your barbarism or the grace of God." The governor, becoming only more and more infuriated, ordered his guards to seize him and throw him into prison. Soon after, these two confessors of the faith, accompanied by the preceding ones, were transferred to the prison of Omura, where they rejoined Blessed Apollinare Franco.

The Venerable Lucy of Fleites.

She was born at Nangazaqui, and belonged to a distinguished family among the nobility. She married a rich Portuguese, Philip of Fleites, who died soon after their marriage. This fervent Christian woman devoted her life to prayer and to works of zeal and charity. She was the consoler of the afflicted, the providence of the poor and the unfortunate. Her lively faith, her devotion to the cause of God were the support of the Christians of Nangazaqui during the violent persecution let loose against them. During these days of trial, the house of this venerable octogenarian was the refuge of missionaries belonging to all the Orders. She was called, indeed, the *Mother of the Religious*. God willed to reward by a glorious martyrdom all the services she had rendered to the Church. When Blessed Richard was taken in her house, Lucy of Fleites was also arrested, her goods were confiscated, and she was put in prison, at Nangazaqui, in company with several other Christians.

Within the prison of Omura were shut up Dominicans, Franciscans, and Jesuits, all forming one family, and preparing themselves for some time past by prayer and penance for their sacrifice. Shortly before their martyrdom, Blessed Richard wrote to the Superior of his convent at Nivelle, in Flanders, "It is nearly a year now that I have been detained in this wretched prison. As companions, I have nine religious of our Order, eight of that of St. Dominic and six of the Society of Jesus. The others are native Christians who helped us in our apostolic ministry. Some among us have been here for five years. Our food consists of a little rice and water. The road to martyrdom has been paved for us by more than three hundred martyrs, all Japanese, on whom all kinds of tortures have been tried. As for us, who still survive them, we are all condemned to die. We religious, with those who gave us hospitality, are to be burnt at a slow fire, the others are to be beheaded. . . . I beg of you, if my mother is still alive, to be so kind as to let her know the great mercy which God has bestowed on me of suffering and dying for Him, for I have no time left to write to her myself. . . ."

The hour of Sacrifice was approaching for the brave martyrs. The Emperor hearing that the prisons of Omura and Nangazaqui were overflowing with Christians, gave orders that the European religious, and those who had given them hospitality, should be burnt alive, and the rest beheaded. No better news could have been brought to the confessors of Jesus Christ. However, each was to be put to death in the province where he had been taken, and this was why the holy prisoners of Omura were separated in death. Blessed Apollinare Franco, Commissary of the Franciscans, Blessed Thomas Zumarraga, Vicar General of the Dominicans, with their companions, remained behind to be put to death at Omura. The other prisoners, of whom there were twenty, arrested in the territory of Nangazaqui, were taken to that town to be executed on the holy mountain

whence already such a number of noble martyrs had flown to their eternal home. Among the confessors transferred from Omura to Nangazaqui, were BB. Richard of St. Anne, Peter of Avila, Vincent of St. Joseph and Leo Satzuma, of the Order of St. Francis, BB. Francis of Moralez, Joseph of St. Hyacinth, Angelo Orsucci, Hyacinth Orphanel, Alphonsus of Mena, of the Order of St. Dominic, Blessed Charles Spinola, Jesuit, and several Japanese. On the way, the prisoners employed their time in praying and in preaching the Faith of their Divine Master. Blessed Peter of Avila especially, who possessed a fine voice and spoke Japanese perfectly, was to be remarked preaching with holy intrepidity the Faith of Jesus Christ. Blessed Vincent of St. Joseph carried a banner on which was painted the Holy Name of Jesus.

On their arrival at Nangazaqui, they were surrounded by an immense crowd of Christians and heathens, numbering a hundred thousand. The land and the sea, the hills and the shores were covered with spectators. More than forty thousand Christians awaited the religious on their passage, so as to get their blessing and beg their prayers, but they were barely able to say a few words interrupted by sobs and tears, those who attempted to approach were brutally beaten back and illtreated by the soldiery. As they neared the holy mountain, the martyrs sang from time to time the *Te Deum* the Litanies and the Psalms. They climbed the steeps of their Calvary with hearts full of joy, and were conducted to the place of execution, about a hundred and fifty feet distant from that of the first martyrdom in the year 1597.

Arrived on the spot where their sacrifice was to be consummated, they waited for an hour for the thirty-five prisoners from Nangazaqui who were to be joined with them in martyrdom. At last was to be seen approaching the glorious band of these valiant Christians, coming to rejoin their fathers and their masters in the Faith. Among

them were persons of all ages and of each sex. Some of the women bore in their arms little children destined to take their share in the sacrifice. Admirable little ones who unable to go to their death unless carried by their mothers were to add to the brightness of their innocence the crown of martyrdom. At the head of these heroic champions of the Faith, walked the venerable octogenarian Lucy of Fleites. This worthy daughter of St. Francis wore the holy habit and held her crucifix in her hands, preaching as she went with burning zeal and encouraging all her companions. "Let us not be afraid," said she, "to place our firm trust in God, He will assist us, and will help us to suffer all things for love of Him. Were those blessed virgins, Cecily, Agatha, Agnes, and so many others, were they of a different nature from ours? We must not doubt that God will come to our help when we are going to die for His cause. Let us have brave hearts. Let us women prove ourselves to be courageous that we may confound the Gentiles, and that we may merit the crowns which Jesus our Spouse has in readiness for us. To-day we shall be with Him in Heaven. At first I was afraid when I thought of the fire, but our Lord Jesus has dispelled my fears, no pain has power to frighten me because I have the hope that God Himself will be my reward." The enraged executioners tore off her the habit of the Third Order, and snatched away and broke to pieces her crucifix, but they could not tear away God from her heart, nor His praises from her lips, and she immediately entoned the *Magnificat*.

On their arrival, the prisoners from Nangazaqui saluted their spiritual Fathers, who returned the salutation,—a salutation, as it were, fragrant with eternal hope. The soldiers, first of all, made the twenty-five martyrs condemned to be burnt, enter the enclosure where the sacrifice was to be consummated. These were the prisoners from Omura, and a few Japanese, among whom was Blessed Lucy of Fleites. Before being bound to the stake, the religious knelt and

embraced with holy joy the instrument of their punishment. The Japanese were then brought into the enclosure to be beheaded before the eyes of the religious. As each entered they were made to kneel down, they joined their hands and received their death-stroke.

Blessed Charles Spinola, on seeing Elisabeth Fernandez, the widow of a martyr, and not perceiving her little son Ignatius, a child of four years old, whom he had himself baptized, said to her, "Where is my little Ignatius?" The admirable mother took up the little one in her arms, and holding him forth exclaimed, "Here he is, Father, he is with me. I brought him that he might become a martyr, so that he might learn to die for God before he knew how to speak, and that he might serve Him before he had offended Him." And she presented the little victim to be blessed by the venerable apostle. The heads of three or four of the holy martyrs rolled at the feet of this child of predestination without his showing any fear, and then he too was beheaded in his mother's arms. The other children were not less heroic, they went, calm and smiling, to their death, like the angels of Heaven. The executioners wanted to inflict upon the religious a first death by making them witness the immolation of their disciples. On the contrary, it was an immense consolation to see these go before them, and to know that these happy souls were delivered from danger and already safe in the Bosom of God.

As soon as the first holocaust was consummated, the executioners set fire to all the piles, the holy confessors were to be burnt by a slow fire. But in the midst of their sufferings the invincible apostles, while they invoked the Holy Name of Jesus on their own behalf, continued to speak to the multitude and to preach to them the Faith of Jesus Christ, with such force and courage as astonished and enraptured all the spectators. Blessed Lucy, unable to contain the zeal which consumed her, spoke from her stake with evangelic courage. "O, all you," said she, "who are here

present at this spectacle, such has never before been seen, tell the world all the wonders of the Lord, tell to each and every one if this religion be false for which we are giving our lives with so much courage and joy. Can a faith be false which works so many prodigies?—a faith which transforms into lions tender children and women who are nearly centenarians? Sons of my country, open your eyes to the light of the Gospel. May the blood which is shed to-day in such plenty for Jesus Christ, touch your hearts, wash your souls and make them be born again in grace. Do not regret our sufferings, envy our fate, rather, and embrace the religion of Jesus Christ. O, then you will be happy! Your Gods are liars. Our God, alone, is holy and faithful to all His promises. When we leave this present life He will receive us into His Kingdom. He will give us eternal peace and the fulness of happiness which will know no end." Lucy then addressed encouraging words to her companions, asked the Fathers for their blessing, once more gave thanks to God and prayed for her unhappy country. Her soul purified by fire soon after went to receive in Heaven her immortal crown.

Though the torture was the same for all, it was not of equal duration for all. The fire was lighted at mid-day, some lingered on until the next morning, others died in the night, whilst others again only had to suffer a few hours. Blessed Richard of St. Anne succumbed after two hours of agony, and according to a witness he was heard long after he expired, to repeat three times the Holy Names of Jesus and of Mary. Blessed Vincent of St. Joseph breathed out his soul while repeating the Name of Jesus. Blessed Peter of Avila exhorted the Christians to perseverance, and implored the heathens to open their eyes to the light, then he repeated the Names of Jesus and Mary, and his blessed soul took flight to its eternal home. The bodies of the Martyrs were guarded so strictly for three days by the executioners that none of the Christians could obtain the

smallest piece thereof. Nevertheless an immense and continuous concourse of Christians came to venerate the holy remains. On the fourth day, the governor of Nangazaqui had the holy bodies burned as well as the instruments of execution, and the ashes were thrown into the open sea.

The sight of the *Great Martyrdom*, and the examples of heroism which accompanied it were a subject of admiration to the heathens themselves, and the occasion of numerous and striking miracles. The officer who superintended this great execution, was visibly punished by the justice of God. One day he fell dead as he sat at dinner. When picked up, his body looked as though it had been roasted before the fire. The immolation of the eight religious who had remained prisoners at Omura, took place in the outskirts of that town, on the twelfth of September, the day after the *Great Martyrdom*, of which it was, so to say, the completion. This second band was composed of Blessed Thomas Zumarraga, Dominican, with two brothers of his Order, of Blessed Apollinare Franco, Friar of the Observance, Commissary of the mission, and Minister Provincial of the Order in Japan. Blessed Francis of St. Bonaventure, cleric, and Blessed Paul of St. Clare, laybrother, of the same Order. Besides these were two Tertiaries of St. Francis who were not included in the Decree of Beatification.

Blessed Apollinare.

He was a native of Aguilar del Campo, in old Castile, and was the son of noble and virtuous parents. He studied at the famous university of Salamanca, took his doctor's degree, and afterwards took the habit of St. Francis among the Friars of the Observance of the Province of St. James. He was a most austere religious and raised to very high contemplation. He was among the most famed preachers of his Province, when, in 1600, his superiors allowed him to depart for the Philippine mission, in company with fifty

religious of his Order. Thence he proceeded to Japan. His zeal and sanctity produced abundant fruit unto salvation in this mission. When the edict of proscription appeared in 1614, he hid himself and remained in the midst of the poor Christians to continue his ministry among them. He was named at this time Minister Provincial of Japan, and charged with the direction of the mission. In 1617, being at Nangazaqui, he heard that there existed not a single priest in the kingdom of Omura, where the Christians were in great numbers and the persecution was very violent, and he resolved to go to their help. After having consulted God in prayer, Blessed Apollinare departed, clothed in the religious habit, preached publicly everywhere, and converted one of the executioners of Blessed Peter of the Assumption. The bonzes were furious against the apostle of Jesus Christ, and denounced him to the governor, who had him arrested on the seventh of July 1617, and cast into the prison of Omura, with some Japanese Christians. The Servant of God spent five years in this prison, and never ceased labouring for the salvation of souls. Among the gaolers were a few compassionate men who permitted the Christians to come by night to the prison. The holy missionary spent his nights in hearing confessions, in catechizing, in baptizing the heathen and reconciling apostates.

Among the Japanese who were fellow prisoners of Blessed Apollinare, was one of his catechists, named Francis, he was a native of Jeddo and had been brought up by the Franciscans. As soon as he heard of the arrest of Father Apollinare, which took place during his absence, he went to the governor of Omura and reproached him with his crimes and apostacy. The infuriated governor had him throw into prison with the Father Provincial, who gave him the habit of the Friars Minor, as a cleric, with the name of *Brother Francis of St. Bonaventure.* Another Christian, named Paul, received the habit as a lay brother, with the name of *Brother Paul of St. Clare*, and a third, John of Ikenda, was

admitted into the Third Order. Blessed Apollinare made them follow the exercises of the noviceship in the prison, and, after the year of probation, he admitted them to profession. Fresh companions came to join these holy confessors, as we have said. These were BB. Richard, Peter of Avila, Orfanel, Moralez, Spinola, with their companions, they made part of the *Great Martyrdom*. These religious, though belonging to different Orders, made their exercises together and formed but one community. The prison was transformed into a house of prayer where the praises of God were sung without ceasing. Blessed Apollinare led such an austere life in prison, that Father Diego of St. Francis was obliged to write and tell him to moderate his penances.

On the first days of September of the year 1622, the holy martyrs, prisoners at Omura, had to separate. Twenty among them were taken to Nangazaqui, as has been already said, to consummate their sacrifice, and the eight who remained behind at Omura were condemned to be burnt alive, and were executed on the twelfth September, in the outskirts of that town. These were Blessed Thomas Zumarraga, with two brothers of his Order, BB. Apollinare Franco, Francis of St. Bonaventure, Paul of St. Clare and the two Tertiaries, John of Ikenda and Mathias Fiachi. Their bodies, says an annalist, were consumed by material fire, and their souls took flight to the heights of Heaven purified by the fire of Divine Love.

The feast of the *Forty-five Franciscan Martyrs* of Japan, beatified by Pius IX., was fixed for the twelfth of September, the day on which was martyred Blessed Apollinare, who, in his position of Minister Provincial and of Commissary of the mission of Japan, is considered the head of this glorious band.

On the seventh of September, 1622, when the persecution was at its height, the enquiry necessary for the canonization of St. Peter Baptist and his companions, the *First martyrs of Japan*, was opened at Nangazaqui. During the following

year the persecution continued to rage, and sent numbers of martyrs to Heaven, among whom were a great many disciples of St. Francis. We shall only speak here of Blessed Francis Galvez, priest, of the Friars Minor of the Observance, since he was included in the Decree of Beatification. This holy man, who was born in 1576 at Utiel, in the diocese of Cuença in Spain, had pursued his theological studies with great success at Valencia. In the year 1600, being then a deacon and twenty-four years of age, he took the habit of the Barefooted Friars in the Province of St. John Baptist and was sent, first to Mexico and afterwards in 1609 to the Philippine Islands, where he applied himself to the study of languages, especially Japanese which he could speak like a native. In 1612 the servant of God crossed over to Japan with several others of his Order and laboured there successfully in the conversion of infidels. He translated the Lives of the Saints and a number of other books into Japanese.

Having been driven into exile at Manilla on account of the edict of 1614, he never lost sight of his beloved mission in Japan, and put the case so strongly before his superiors that after a stay of some months in the Philippine Islands he was allowed to go to Malacca, in the hope of finding a vessel there bound for Nangazaqúi. He was much taken aback when on arriving at Malacca he heard of the prohibition to sailors and merchants, under pain of death, against bringing missionaries into Japan. But this courageous apostle was not dismayed by the formal refusal that stood in his way. He disguised himself as a negro, blackened his face and succeeded in obtaining a passage on board a vessel as rower. In this manner, at the cost of much fatigue and danger, he managed to return to Japan and continue his missionary labours. With untiring zeal he preached the Gospel in the kingdoms of Voxu and Mongami, and everywhere was successful in bringing many souls to salvation. Towards the close of the year 1623, Father Francis Galvez was at

Jeddo, the capital of the empire, with Father Jerome of Angelis, a Sicilian Jesuit. The two priests were denounced by the governor, arrested and thrown into prison, with forty-eight Christians, among whom was the brave Faramondo, the nephew of the emperor, who had already undergone many sufferings for Jesus Christ. This prince was a member of the Third Order of St. Francis.

The fifty confessors of the faith were condemned to be burnt alive on a hill near the city. On the fourth of December the ministers of justice bound the prisoners and after parading them through the streets, led them out to the place of torture. On the way the two Fathers preached the Faith to the large crowd of Christians and pagans which surrounded them. A memorable incident occurred to increase the effect of this great sight. At the moment of the execution, a noble of the highest rank appeared upon the scene. The judges thought that he was the bearer of a message from the emperor, and caused the ranks to be opened. He then dismounted from his horse and, addressing the chief magistrate, asked why such men had received so cruel a sentence. They replied that it was because they were Christians. "I am a Christian like them," cried the nobleman, "and I demand you to let me share their fate." The judges, at a loss what to do, sent for advice to the regent of the empire, and the intrepid champion of the Faith was joined to the holy martyrs. Moved by this heroic example, three hundred Christians ran before the judges and falling on their knees made a public profession of their Faith and claimed the grace of dying for Jesus Christ. They were repulsed with violence, and the judges in fear of a rising hurried the execution and gave orders for the faggots to be set on fire. The holy martyrs in the midst of the flames displayed an invincible constancy. Raising their eyes towards the Heaven they hoped to gain, they prayed to Jesus, for Whose sake they were dying, for help in this last journey. Blessed Francis and Blessed Jerome of Angelis never ceased address-

ing the multitude and paying honour to our Divine Redeemer. At this sight the crowd was struck dumb with astonishment and the very pagans were compelled to acknowledge the influence of such marvellous heroism. The two priests and one Japanese are the only ones of these martyrs who were included in the Decree of Beatification.

After this new holocaust, the fire of persecution, so far from being extinguished at Jeddo, blazed all the fiercer. Three hundred Christians in this city were cast into prison, and on December the twenty-ninth, four and twenty of them won a martyr's palm. Among them sixteen little children excited the admiration of all, going to death, glad and smiling, like to a feast. During the year 1623 in the imperial domain, alone, nearly five hundred souls were numbered among the martyrs. Blessed Francis Galvez appeared to Blessed Gabriel Magdalene surrounded by his comrades in martyrdom, and after telling him that he too would be martyred for Jesus, bade him warn the Christians that in a short time a persecution more terrible than any of the preceding ones would break out, and that it would only cease when no more victims remained. "Let all, therefore," said he, "prepare to undergo this last struggle with the patience and fortitude of Christian heroes." The event bore witness only too well to the truth of this vision.

Among the martyrs of the Seraphic Order who shed lustre on the Japanese Church in 1624, were three who were included in the Decree of Beatification, namely, Blessed Louis Sotelo, bishop-elect of Eastern Japan, Blessed Louis Sassandra, priest of the Order of the Friars Minor of the Observance and Blessed Louis Baba of the Third Order.

Blessed Louis Sotelo.

He was the apostle of the kingdom of Wochou, and formerly ambassador to the Holy See and to the King of Spain. He was one of the most eminent mission-

aries of Japan. A great French writer has said of this blessed man, "The life of this illustrious Franciscan martyr would require a work to itself, which would include the most important events in the history of the Church in Japan. When once the narrative of his apostolic labours is published in all its glory, Sotelo will be one of the most shining figures of the Seraphic Order and the Church of Jesus Christ.[2] The holy man, a prince of the blood, was born at Seville on the eighth of September, 1574. After studying with brilliant success at the University of Salamanca, he bade farewell to the world and to all his hopes and took the habit of St. Francis at the convent of the Friars of the Observance at Seville. He was then twenty years of age. Regardless of the nobility of his birth, in the cloister he became the humblest and most penitent of the community. His love of our Lord aroused in him a great zeal for the salvation of souls. In 1600 his superiors gave him leave to go to the mission in the Philippine Islands. Having stayed there some time and pursued his evangelical labours, in 1603, Louis Sotelo started for Japan. He went on this voyage not only as a missionary, but also as secretary to Father Diego Bermeo, whom the viceroy of the Philippines was sending as ambassador to the Emperor of Japan. The embassy was quite successful. It excited in the Japanese monarch a deep respect for our holy religion, and he was astonished at the great talents of Father Sotelo, as well as at the fluency with which he spoke the Japanese language. He showed a special liking for the missionary, and gave him authority to preach the Gospel throughout the length and breadth of the empire and to raise churches and convents wherever he wished.

This kindness was a source of the greatest joy to all the Christians and to the missionaries in particular. Blessed Louis spread the Gospel through all the provinces of the empire and converted immense numbers of pagans to the

[2] *Saggio di bibliographia Sanfrancescana*, Marcellino da Civezza.

Faith, raising churches to the true God and bearing witness to his words by miracles. He won the respect of the princes and grandees of the empire and converted many of them to the true Faith. By means of his influence at the court, he caused an order for expulsion directed against the Jesuit missionaries, to be withdrawn. Blessed Louis Sotelo was the first to penetrate into the kingdom of Wochou, one of the largest states of Japan. He established therein flourishing Christian communities and admitted the king himself Idate Mazamoune among the number of the catechumens. Suffice it to say that the holiness and the works of Blessed Louis Sotelo had spread the fame of his name throughout the whole Empire. Next to St. Francis Xavier and St. Peter Baptist, he was undoubtedly the greatest apostle of Japan.

Idate Mazamoune, king of Wochou, who entertained a great affection for the servant of God, employed him to go as ambassador with Prince Fachecoura, his prime minister, to the Sovereign Pontiff and to the King of Spain, to bear witness before the former to the favour with which he regarded the cause of religion, and to conclude with the latter a treaty, both political and commercial. He sent with them a hundred and fifty Japanese lords, and enjoined all the members of the embassy to render the same obedience to Father Louis Sotelo as they did to himself. The ambassadors started in October, 1613, and reached the port of Acapulco on the twenty-fifth of January, 1614. They proceeded from thence to Mexico where the viceroy received them with the most distinguished honours. It was in Holy Week. Sixty-eight members of the embassy were solemnly baptized in the church of St. Francis and confirmed by the Archbishop. They decided to put off the baptism of the chief ambassador till their arrival in Spain. On the fifth of October, 1614, they landed at the harbour of San Lucar de Barrameda, in Andalusia. A magnificent reception awaited them at Seville. The city showed itself justly proud of receiving Father Louis Sotelo who had been born within its

walls, and of entertaining in his person one of the glories of the Church, and the apostle who had converted and baptized innumerable pagans.

The authorities of Seville had a formal audience with the chief ambassador and heard the despatches read, which he had addressed to the city. In fact the prince of Wochou had written directly to the magistrates of the city and had presented them with a sword and dagger of great value as a token of friendship. The embassy left Seville on the twenty-fifth of November, travelled through Cordova and Toledo, and entered Madrid on the twentieth of December. During the whole of their journey through Spain they had been liberally entertained at the expense of his Catholic Majesty, and at Madrid they received hospitality at the hands of the Friars of the Observance in that city, at the same monarch's expense. The ambassador of the prince of Wochou had an audience of King Philip III., on the thirtieth of January 1615, accompanied by Father Sotelo. His majesty was standing under the canopy surrounded by the great nobles of the realm. The ambassador presented his dispatch after the manner of the East, in which Idate Mazamoune proclaimed himself convinced of the error of the Japanese sects and stated his intention of embracing the Christian religion with all his subjects. He demanded the assistance of the king in order to carry out this difficult task, and in the first place desired that missionaries should be sent, and secondly that a treaty should be entered into between him and the King of Spain. The king replied that he looked forward with the greatest joy to the prospect of seeing the Christian religion propagated throughout all Japan, and that it had now been started under such auspicious circumstances in the kingdom of Wochou, that he received most heartily their offers of friendship. Then Father Sotelo, having obtained leave to speak, addressed the king in the name of the Emperor of Japan, and said that five years before he had selected him to bear to his Majesty

a message of friendship and peace, but that his failing health had prevented him from crossing over to Spain to carry out his mission, and therefore Father Alfonso Munoz had taken his place. That he, remaining in Japan, had learned that the Dutch had sent an embassy to the emperor to oppose his intention of concluding a treaty with Spain, by making more favourable proposals to him. "I," added Father Sotelo, "persuaded the emperor that with the mere friendship of the King of Spain he could attain greater success than that promised by the Dutch, whereupon the emperor gave me the direction of this embassy in order to ask for an alliance with your Majesty."

The king answered that he thought very highly of the proposals of the emperor, and would discuss them on a more suitable occasion, promising at the same time to respond favourably to his friendly overtures. Then Father Sotelo, the ambassador of both the King of Wochou and the Emperor of all Japan, handed to the King of Spain the emperor's letter. On the seventeenth of February, Fachecoura was baptized in the royal monastery of the Poor Clares of Madrid, by Don Diego de Gusman, head chaplain to the king. The godfather and godmother were the Duke of Lerme and the countess of Barachia. King Philip III. was present with the future queen of France, Anne of Austria, the betrothed bride of Louis XIII., and the two infantas. The ambassador stayed eight months more at the convent of St. Francis in Madrid, and then set out for Rome. On the thirtieth of September they arrived at Sarragossa, where they visited our Lady of the Pillar, a similar visit was made to our Lady of Montserrat. At Barcelona the viceroy overwhelmed the ambassadors with kindness. They sailed from Barcelona to Savona and thence to Genoa at which place the doge and the senate held a formal audience of the ambassadors. On reaching Rome in October 1615, the ambassadors were at once allowed to kiss the feet of the Sovereign Pontiff Paul V. at the Palace

of Monte Cavallo. After this first audience they took up their residence at the convent of the Friars of the Observance, known as the *Ara Cæli*. Their formal entry took place on the twenty-ninth of October.

The ambassadors were conducted to the Porta Angelica in the carriage of Cardinal Borghese. The horses of the apostolic palace had been most gorgeously caparisoned. The advance guard consisted of a squadron of light horse, then came the households of the cardinals and ambassadors, as well as the flower of the Roman nobility, and a great number of Frenchmen and Spaniards of distinction. Then, at the right of the Lord Mark Antony Vittorij, nephew of his Holiness, came the ambassador Philip Fachecoura, attended by the Swiss guard, and by Japanese equerries. Lastly, in the carriage of Cardinal Borghese, was Blessed Louis Sotelo, accompanied by other religious of his Order.

On the third of November took place a solemn audience of the Pope. The ambassadors started from the convent of *Ara cæli*. They were taken to the audience chamber, where the Sovereign Pontiff, Paul V., was sitting on his throne, surrounded by the cardinals, archbishops, bishops, protonotaries apostolic, chamberlains and by the chief members of the nobility. After the usual genuflexion, the ambassadors held up before them a silk purse richly embroidered containing the letter of the King of Wochou addressed to His Holiness. In this letter the prince told the Sovereign Pontiff that having learnt from Father Sotelo the excellence of the Christian religion, though, for grave reasons, he could not profess it himself at present, he wished his subjects to embrace it. He begged His Holiness to send him a certain number of Franciscan religious of the Observance, promising to protect them and to help them in building churches. He asked also that a bishop should be nominated, pledging himself to provide him with abundant revenues. After this letter had been read, Father Gregory Petrocha of Mantua, of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance, later on

Bishop of Alba, spoke in the name of the prince and the ambassadors. Peter Strozzi, apostolic secretary, answered in the name of the Sovereign Pontiff, expressing the consolation felt by His Holiness and his hope of soon hearing of the baptism of the King of Wochou. The ambassadors then went to pay their respects to all the members of the Sacred College. And lastly they received all the honours customary towards ambassadors to Christian sovereigns.

Paul V. had thought of raising Blessed Louis Sotelo to the Cardinalate and of sending him as legate to the king, Idate Mazamoune,[3] such was the estimation in which the Sovereign Pontiff held the sanctity and lights of the servant of God. As soon as it was noised abroad that Father Sotelo was to be named Cardinal, such intrigues were set on foot by envious persons and so cleverly were they carried on that the Pope was persuaded to give up the project. Meanwhile, the news of the death of Cerqueira, Bishop of Japan, reached Rome. This prelate, like his predecessor, belonged to the Society of Jesus. The Pope then created a second bishopric in Japan for the eastern part of the empire, which was evangelized by the Franciscans, and he named to this see, Father Louis Sotelo. His Holiness gave him letters for the King of Spain and for the nuncio at Madrid, who was appointed to consecrate him. The blessed man in his memoir to Urban VIII. on religious affairs in Japan, makes known all the intrigues and machinations which were set on foot, both at Madrid, and at Manilla, to prevent his being consecrated, and, especially, to prevent his return to Japan.

Blessed Louis was not able to be consecrated bishop, notwithstanding the commands of the Pope, nor the good-will of the nuncio at Madrid. Nothing remained but for him to go and rejoin the flock which the Vicar of Jesus Christ had committed to his care. His presence was all

[3] Father Felix of Huerta, Martinez, Stanislas Melchior, Llave, Chronicle of the Philippines, etc.

the more needed because after his departure from Japan a violent persecution had broken out against the Christians of that empire. The holy apostle set sail for New Mexico, and went on to the Philippines where he was to find a vessel sent by the king Idate Mazamoune, to bring him back to Japan. The enemy of all good awaited him to stir up a thousand difficulties in his way. It was only after the lapse of four years and thanks to the energetic intervention of the apostolic Delegate, that he was able to leave Manilla and go to the Christian missions, of which Pope Paul V. had named him pastor. Father Louis Sotelo landed in Japan in the year 1622. He brought with him two companions who were to share his martyrdom, Blessed Louis Sassandra and Blessed Louis Baba.

Blessed Louis Sassandra.

He was the son of a noble Japanese of Jeddo, who died for the Faith in 1613. After the martyrdom of his father, Louis left his native country and took the habit of St. Francis among the Friars of the Observance of the Province of St. Peter and St. Paul of Mechoacan. He was so pure and angelic a soul that, according to the testimony of his brothers, it seemed as if he had never sinned in Adam. He had a lively and keen intelligence, and his progress in study was rapid. By a dispensation he was ordained priest before arriving at the canonical age. His most burning desire was to return to Japan to evangelize his dear countrymen, his wishes were soon gratified, he was appointed secretary to Blessed Sotelo, when he, passing through Mexico, was on his way to his mission.

Blessed Louis Baba.

He was born of Japanese Christian parents, and was baptized by Blessed Louis Sotelo. From his earliest years his parents had devoted him to God in a convent of the Order. Thus he lived until he was ten years old,

employed in the service of the altar. Blessed Louis Sotelo, delighted with his precocious piety and his innocence, took him with him on a voyage to Europe. The child never more left his dear master, whose sufferings and martyrdom he shared. He took the habit of the Third Order and made his profession in prison.

When Blessed Louis Sotelo returned to Japan, the persecution raged throughout the empire with extreme violence. He crossed over in a Chinese junk, and the heathen, fearing that they had compromised themselves by bringing over missionaries, gave him up with his companions to the Japanese authorities. The holy missionary asked to speak with the governor of Nangazaqui, "I am," said he, "Father Louis Sotelo, ambassador in Spain from Mazamoune, and I am returning with answers. No captain of a vessel would have received us as religious, and so we put on secular dress. May I beg your Lordship to announce my arrival to the council of the emperor, if he condemns me to death, understand well, that I am ready to give my life for the Faith of Jesus Christ, which I have always desired to preach and forward throughout this empire." The governor listened to him with attention and respect, and promised to refer to the emperor, but, blinded by his ambition, he shut up the Father and his two companions in the prison at Omura, where they remained two years before going to martyrdom, and underwent all sorts of insults and ill-usage. In the same prison were two venerable religious who were to share their martyrdom, Father Peter Vasquez of the Order of St. Dominic, and Father Michael Cavalho of the Society of Jesus.

During his captivity Blessed Louis Sotelo wrote several letters, which reveal his deep humility and the joy that flooded his soul at the thought of giving his life for Jesus Christ. He likewise wrote, seven months before his martyrdom, by order of Paul V., *A Memoir, addressed to the Sovereign Pontiff, on matters of religion in Japan.* The original

manuscript of this famous memoir, of which certain writers, blinded by party spirit, have wanted to contest the authenticity, is kept in the archives of our Fathers at Manilla.[4] The blessed man has also left us an explanation of the catechism in Japanese, and various writings for the instruction of neophytes.

It was in the year 1624, on the twenty-fifth of August, feast of St. Louis, king, that our three martyrs named Louis, went to receive in Heaven the crown of victory. On the morning of this day, the governor of Omura informed the five prisoners of the sentence which condemned them to be burnt to death. On hearing the good news, their souls bounded with joy and they gave solemn thanks to God. Before starting for the place of torture, the governor put them through an examination and asked them their names and position in life. Blessed Louis Sotelo answered in the name of all. "I am a religious of the Order of St. Francis, and am called Louis Sotelo. These two Fathers belong, one of them to the Order of St. Dominic, and the other to the Society of Jesus, they are called Peter Vasquez and Michael Cavalho. One of these two Japanese is a priest and religious of my Order, the other was at first a catechist, but while in prison I admitted him into the Order of Penance of our Father St. Francis. We all preach the Faith of Jesus Christ and are ready to die for this Faith." This declaration was taken down, and the holy confessors were taken to the place of execution, a league from Omura, the very same spot were Blessed Apollinare and his com-

[4] Father Louis of Fabriano. *Storia di quaranta cinque Martiri giapponesi* p. 338. This famous Memoir was written by Blessed Louis Sotelo, in the prison of Omura, seven months before his martyrdom. An ancient copy of it exists in the National Library at Paris, and another copy in the Library of the Academy of history at Madrid. This Memoir was printed at Paris, Madrid and Frankfort, in 1634, and M. Léon Pagés has inserted it in his *Histoire de la religion chrétienne, au Japon.* (Seconde partie, p. 137. Paris. Douniol. 1870.)

panions had gathered the palm of martyrdom. On the way they never ceased preaching Jesus Christ. When they arrived at the place of martyrdom, they were bound to the stake, and the faggots were lighted. The bonds of Blessed Louis Sassandra and Blessed Louis Baba being soon consumed, the two young martyrs walked through the flames and came and knelt at the feet of Blessed Louis Sotelo, their master, to beg him to bless them and to pray to our Lord for them. "My very dear sons," said the apostle to them, "you are the beloved and the chosen of God, what need have you to be blessed by me, when I am myself hoping to be blessed by the most merciful God through your prayers? I am but a great sinner, and you, innocent doves, have never offended our Lord. However to console you, I bless you. Yes, may our Lord bless you and give you the strength to win the crown of glory which awaits you." Thus blessed and consoled, they returned to the stake, and their souls purified by fire took flight, with those of the other martyrs, to the place of refreshment, light and peace.

On the seventeenth of August, 1627, the Seraphic Order sent to Heaven eleven martyrs who have been included in the Decree of Beatification, BB. Francis of St. Mary, priest, Bartholomew Laurel, Antony of St. Francis, lay brothers of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance, and eight Tertiaries.

Blessed Francis of St. Mary.

He was a native of Alvernajo, in the diocese of Toledo. He took the habit among the Barefooted Friars of the Province of St. Joseph, where he was conspicuous for his knowledge and virtue. His heart burnt with the love of God and inspired him with a great desire to work for the conversion of the heathen. He obtained leave from his superiors to go to the Philippines. In 1623, he went on to the mission of Japan, and took with him Blessed Bartholomew Laurel, a Mexican, who had taken the holy

habit among the Friars of the Observance of the Province of the Holy Gospel. On his arrival in Japan, he took with him a fervent Japanese, as catechist, whom he afterwards received in prison as a lay brother, giving him the name of Antony of St. Francis. Brother Antony by his zeal, courage, and intrepidity was like a second providence not only for the Franciscans, but also for his Christian countrymen. He took no rest either day or night. By day he visited the Christians, especially the sick, by night he assisted Father Francis in his laborious ministry.

Father Francis, seconded by these two brothers and by a few courageous Tertiaries, worked among the Christians to good effect, and converted a great many heathen. One day that he was at Nangazaqui, in the house of Gaspar Vaz, with Brother Laurel and some Tertiaries, a band of soldiers invaded the house. The two religious were arrested and put in prison, together with Gaspar Vaz, Mary Vaz, his wife, and six other Tertiaries, who were all either the hosts of, or fellow-workers with, the religious. At the moment they were being dragged to prison, a young Japanese came out of a house, and, coming to the governor, spoke thus to him, "Since you nourish such hatred against the Christian law, and that you thirst so for blood, I will give you a victim who will be most pleasing to you. You have, I know, a great number of spies, of informers and of executioners, so that not one of the faithful shall escape out of your hands. The decrees which you have put forth against the disciples of Jesus Christ are very cruel, the rewards promised to the informers are considerable. Now, here before you, is an informer who is going to denounce to you an adorer of Christ. This adorer of Christ is myself, who, for many years has been working continually to fortify the faithful and to do everything possible to convert the heathen, numbers of whom have been brought to the Christian faith. I know all your spies and your informers, and they do not know me, for I have always managed to escape their search.

But to-day that you are dragging to prison my good Father Francis and our friends, I denounce myself and demand the reward of this information. Do you know what that reward is? It is that of being allowed to be a sharer in the captivity, sufferings, and death of my beloved Father and my dear companions, for the triumph of the faith that you think to extinguish. By this you will understand whether Christians fear your tortures. But, tremble at the same time, for the anger of God is hanging over you. If you would escape it, cease to persecute the adorers of Christ, and adore Him yourself, you will then receive in Heaven an everlasting reward." This brave Christian was no other than the faithful catechist of Father Francis, Brother Antony. He was absent when the two religious and the eight Tertiaries were arrested. As soon as he was informed of it, he came and gave himself up, as we have said, so as to share their martyrdom. This blessed man was only a Tertiary, during his captivity he took the habit and was professed in the First Order as a lay brother.

The three religious, their host Gaspar Vaz and another Tertiary endured death by fire. Mary Vaz and the five other Tertiaries were beheaded. The constancy of these brave champions was a solemn testimony to the Faith of Jesus Christ, which astonished the heathen themselves. Children from three to five years old, sons of these blessed martyrs, shed, on this same occasion, their blood in testimony of the Faith, but their names have not been inserted in the Decree of Beatification. This great holocaust took place at Nangazaqui, on the *Holy Mountain*, which had already been hallowed by the blood of a multitude of martyrs. Some days after, on the seventh of September, three Japanese Tertiaries, three new champions of the faith, gathered on the same spot the laurels of martyrdom. The Acts of the process do not give them, it is true, the title of Tertiaries, but our Manilla Fathers have proved from manuscripts of the time, preserved in their archives, that these three holy

martyrs belonged to the Third Order and that they gave themselves out as Tertiaries.[5]

On the eighth of September, 1628, on the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, a fresh band of Franciscan heroes made their entry into Heaven there to sing the praises of the Queen of Martyrs. These were Blessed Antony of St. Bonaventure, Commissary of the mission of Japan, Blessed Dominic of Nangazaqui, lay brother, both belonging to the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance, and thirteen Tertiaries of all ages and both sexes. Blessed Dominic Castellet, Provincial of the Dominicans in Japan, two Religious and several Tertiaries of the same Order were joined to the children of St. Francis. All sealed, once again, with their blood, the traditional union between the two Orders. *The Holy Mountain* of Nangazaqui was the scene of their last combat.

Blessed Antony of St. Bonaventure.

He was born at Tui, in Galicia, about the year 1588. His family belonged to the nobility. After going through a brilliant course of studies at the university of Salamanca, he entered among the Barefooted Friars of the Observance of the Province of St. Paul. Burning with zeal for gaining souls to God, he went, in 1609, on the mission of the Philippines with fifty-five missionaries of the Order. In 1618, to his great joy, he was sent on the mission for evangelizing Japan. At this time the storm of persecution was raging with extreme violence against the disciples of Jesus Christ. Our blessed Saint made the sacrifice of his life as soon as he arrived in the midst of these desolated Christian missions, and set himself to work with unbounded courage. Father Diego of St. Francis, Commissary General of the Order in Japan, speaks of him in these terms. "Father Antony of St. Bonaventure

[5] Father Louis of Fabriano, in the work already cited, p. 388.

was an indefatigable worker and gained innumerable souls to God. Night and day he was at work, hearing confessions baptizing, catechizing, raising up again those who had fallen through fear of the persecution. He reconciled in a short time more than two thousand of the latter, and many among them persevered unto martyrdom. In these difficult days when Christianity was everywhere scoffed at and persecuted, he baptized more than a thousand heathen. During the ten years which his apostolic ministry lasted, nothing could stop the efforts of his zeal."

On the twenty-first of January, 1628, he was denounced by a traitor and taken to the prison of Omura, where he had to undergo a painful captivity of twenty months. Dominic of Nangazaqui, a Japanese Tertiary and catechist to Father Antony, soon heard of his arrest, he had shared in all the works, in all the fatigues of his spiritual Father, and he wished also to share in his last struggle and to participate in his last victory. He therefore went and presented himself before the judge, and declared that he was the servant and helper of the Father, he was immediately seized and shut up in the prison of Omura. It was during this captivity that the Father Commissary admitted him to clothing and profession in the Third Order, as a lay brother.

During his captivity, Blessed Antony of St. Bonaventure wrote several letters from which his deep humility and burning love for our Lord can be gathered. Two months before his martyrdom he wrote to one of his friends, "Father Dominic Castellet, of the Order of St. Dominic, is my companion in this prison. God thus permits it, that as we have so loved one another in this life, we shall not be parted in death. Though I have but a very indifferent opinion of myself, and if I had my due I ought not to have any share in this good luck, it seems to me that we are going to be called to the combat. I put myself in the hands of God, and I beg Him to take me to Himself not only by the torture of fire, like the other martyrs, but amid all the

tortures which can be imagined, so that this rotten trunk shall be treated as it deserves, and shall at last be fit to be presented before the Majesty of God, to Whom be praise, a thousand and a thousand times, from all creatures."

The day before the martyrdom, he wrote to the Provincial of the Philippines, "If your Charity already knows of my happy fate, I have nothing else to tell you, unless it be to give thanks to God, Who has vouchsafed to grant such great mercy to so unworthy a servant. I am so astonished at it myself that I am continually giving thanks to Him. When I look into myself and acknowledge how slight are my merits, and then when I see where I am, and that I know that the stakes have been erected and the faggots ready for sixteen days for our execution, I still doubt that it can be for me! O mercy of my God, Who repays him so generously who has served Thee so ill!"

It remains for us to say a few words about the thirteen martyrs, disciples of St. Francis in the Third Order.

Blessed John Tomaqui.

He was converted by St. Martin of the Ascension, one of the first martyrs of Japan, was the usual host and guide of the religious, and one of the most active helpers of the missionaries. His pious wife died, leaving him with four children who were martyrs with him for Jesus Christ, they were *Dominic*, sixteen years old, *Michael*, thirteen, *Thomas*, ten, and *Paul*, seven. The judge unable to overcome the unshaken constancy of the father, did all in his power to make the children apostatize, but they were worthy of their father. The judge then turned to Paul, the youngest among them, and tried to win him over. The child contented himself with answering, "My father and my brothers tell me that if you put me to death I shall go to Paradise, there my mother waits for me with a beautiful crown. And then I shall find our Lord Jesus in Paradise,

Who loves little children so much and Who will give them a Kingdom greater than that of Japan. That is where I want to go."

The courage of his children was balm to the heart of the heroic Christian father. Still the struggle was a hard one. John Tomaqui was bound to the stake to be tortured, his four sons were placed on their knees before him, their heads bent, the executioner raised his axe, but before striking the innocent victims their father was asked if he would not even now apostatize so as to save the lives of his children. "This is the time to be firmer than ever," replied the admirable father. "My dear children," said he, "Heaven is opening above your heads, one moment more and you will enter there triumphant." The children were questioned, and echoing the words of their father, exclaimed, "Heaven is awaiting us, why are you so long about it? We are Christians, long live Jesus!" The axe fell on the victims, and these little angels of earth took flight to Heaven. John Tomaqui, consoled by the triumph of his children, had nothing further to do than to thank God and to consummate his own sacrifice.

Blessed Louis Nifaci.

He was a worthy rival of the blessed martyr, John Tomaqui. He was the father of two young martyrs, *Francis* aged five years, and *Dominic* who was only two. After having been general in chief of a division of the army, Louis Nifaci opened his eyes to the light of the Gospel, was baptized by Father Jerome of Jesus, and enrolled in the Third Order of St. Francis. From this moment he renounced a soldier's life to become a helper of the missionaries. He filled the office of catechist to Blessed Antony of St. Bonaventure, at Nangazaqui, when he was denounced as being a Christian and a host of the religious. The judge sent for him into his presence and said, "Louis, give up your faith or you shall be beheaded together with

your children." "I bring up my children in the Christian faith and to be martyrs," replied the brave Christian, "do with us what you please, as for me I shall be happy to die with my children for God, Who gave them to me." He spent nine months in prison where he underwent persecutions and sufferings without number. One thing alone pierced his heart with grief, and that was to see the sufferings of his little children. On the other hand, he was consoled with the thought that they would soon go and sing the praises of God with the Angels. Blessed Louis Nifaci was beheaded after having seen his two children sacrificed before his eyes.

Blessed Matthew Alvarez, sculptor, and Blessed Michael Jamada, son of the governor of Nangoya.

THESE two were united in close and holy friendship. After having for long devoted themselves to the service of the missionaries, they became boatmen on purpose to convey the religious wherever the needs of their holy ministry called them. They underwent martyrdom by fire. Blessed Michael had a child of three years old named *Laurence*, who culled the palm of martyrdom with his father. These latter are not called Tertiaries in the acts of the process, but it is certain that they belonged to the Third Order. We are informed of it, in an account given by Father Diego Pardo, to whom Blessed Michael was attached as catechist, and in other accounts by those who knew him. These documents are preserved in the archives of the convent of our Franciscan Fathers at Manilla.[6]

Blessed Louisa.

SHE was an octogenarian, and was martyred at the stake for having acted as hostess to the religious. She was converted to the Faith by St. Peter Baptist, and em-

[6] Father Louis of Fabriano, in the work already cited, p. 425.

braced the Rule of the Third Order. The great virtues of Louisa and her zeal, which stood every test, in helping to spread the Gospel were very remarkable. Her husband and her daughter, also Tertiaries, were martyred with her, but they were not included in the Decree of Beatification.[7]

Also *Blessed Romanus*, catechist to the fathers, whom Martinez believes to have been the son of Blessed Louisa, likewise shared in this great and memorable martyrdom.

Such were the heroes who, their robes dyed in the blood of the Lamb, were born in Heaven on the same day that Mary, pure and immaculate, was born on earth.

We may here remark that the religious of St. Francis, in Japan, worked, so to say, side by side with the sons of St. Dominic. Between the two Orders there was a continual interchange of mutual services. Over and over again the sons of the two great Patriarchs mingled their blood, as well as their labours, in the same arena, and so welded closer and closer together the traditional union of the two Families. Moreover, owing to these very close relations, the faithful, equally attached to both Orders, would embrace the Third Order of St. Francis at the same time as that of St. Dominic. This is the case with Blessed Louisa and of some other among the martyrs of whom we have spoken. The young martyrs, whose acts we have related, belonged, notwithstanding their tender years, to the Third Order. In these days of persecution, when to be called a Christian was to become a martyr, the pious Japanese Tertiaries used to beg the religious to give the habit of the Third Order to their little children, so that they might gain strength, in case they needed it, to support them under the trial of the last combat. These children, however, were not professed

[7] Among the numberless martyrs who sealed with their blood the faith of Jesus Christ, there are a great number whose names and acts have been preserved by the writers of the time, often eye witnesses. But amid such a violent persecution, the canonical processes in view to Beatification could only be prepared for a comparatively small number.

until they attained the age prescribed by the Church, unless they were on the road to martyrdom.

During the four years which followed this great holocaust, so memorable in the records of Christian heroism, the persecution raged with still greater violence, and the Church in Japan never ceased for a single day to give the testimony of blood to Jesus Christ. On the third of September, 1632, a fresh holocaust took place, which comprised six religious. Three Fathers of the Order of St. Augustine, one Jesuit, and two sons of St. Francis, Blessed Jerome of the Cross, priest, and Gabriel of Magdalene, lay brother, of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance, were martyred by fire. This took place at Nangazaqui, on the *Holy Mountain*, the great arena of the martyrs, justly called, later on, the Coliseum of Japan. These six religious were the last champions of this band of martyrs, beatified by Pius IX., in 1867. Ever since this time, that is to say, since the year 1632, multitudes of Christians, and among them many disciples of St. Francis, again watered with their blood these Japanese lands, but the gates of the empire were shut before long to Europeans, and the apostolic processes could not be made, and were stopped in the year 1632.

Blessed Jerome Torres.

He was born at Nangazaqui, had been admitted into the Third Order and sent to the Franciscans at Manilla, where he went through his studies and was ordained priest. He worked for many years with great fruit, at the conversion of his countrymen, the Japanese, who were exiled to the Philippines, or attracted to this country for the sake of trade. The servant of God never lost sight of his unfortunate country, and resolved to go to the help of his persecuted brethren, just at the very moment when the ranks of the missionaries mown down by the persecution, were being thinned more and more in the Church of Japan.

He therefore returned to his country in 1628, and at his request, Father Diego of St. Francis received him into the First Order, with the name of Jerome of the Cross. He was arrested in 1631, in the midst of his apostolic labours, and thrown into prison at Omura, then taken to Nangazaqui to be tortured and martyred in company with other religious. The servant of God bore all his torments with the courage, calm, and humble patience which characterizes the heroes of the faith.

Blessed Gabriel of Magdalene.

He was a simple lay brother, and was *one of the great apostles of Japan*. He was born at Fonseca, in New Castile. After having studied medicine in the world, he entered, at the age of thirty, among the Barefooted Friars of the Province of St. Joseph. He soon arrived at such a pitch of perfection that our Lord vouchsafed to favour him with ecstacies and visions. In the various offices of porter, cook, infirmarian, and questor, he revived again the spirit and virtues of St. Didacus and St. Paschal. Letters from Japan inspired him with the wish to go and devote himself in gaining souls to God in those far off lands.

In 1612, the blessed man landed in Japan, which was to be for twenty years the scene of his labours and to witness his miracles. The apostleship of Blessed Gabriel was one of the most glorious and fruitful, not only by reason of the number of years devoted to it, but also, and above all, by reason of the fervour of his zeal, the holiness of his life, his striking miracles, and the wonderful and countless cures which he wrought. The multitude of heathen whom he baptized during these twenty years is incalculable. The miraculous cures worked by the blessed man, even on the heathen and the great ones of the Court, earned him such esteem and reputation throughout Japan, that when the persecution was at its height, the governors of the town never durst lay hands on him. They allowed him, on the

contrary, to go wherever he was sent for by the sick, and in this way he was able to pursue the course of his apostolic labours. On many occasions, it is true, he was arrested with other Christians and taken to execution, but as soon as he was recognized by the governors, to his great vexation, he was given his freedom. Then adoring the secret designs of Divine Wisdom, he continued with fresh zeal his ministry of charity, curing the sick, fortifying the Christians, instructing the heathen and baptizing them, lastly, spreading the kingdom of God under the very eyes of the persecutors themselves.

Our Lord vouchsafed at last to respond to the desires of His servant. Blessed Gabriel was seized with other religious on the twentieth of March, 1630, and thrown into prison at Omura. This time he was warned that the hour of his last sacrifice was arrived. He was so overcome with joy, one of his companions relates, that he remained absorbed in a long ecstacy. Blessed Gabriel had become, as it were, the idol of the people, both by his virtues and the miraculous cures which he continually wrought, so that his imprisonment was looked upon as a public misfortune. Innumerable petitions were sent to the emperor asking for his release, or at least that he might be allowed to leave the prison whenever he was wanted by the sick. The request of the people was not listened to, the princes and grandees alone obtained leave that the Saint should come to their palaces, with a strong escort, to heal the members of their families. One of the most wonderful cures was that wrought on the niece of the governor of the province. This man was a sworn enemy of the Christians and their most fierce persecutor, he it was who had put the prisoners in chains and was preparing to have them put to death. The young girl, who up to that time had been a heathen, was healed in body by the servant of God, while her soul was regenerated by the holy waters of baptism. Immediately that the governor heard of the conversion of his niece he got into a rage with

Blessed Gabriel and his convert, and threatened them with the most frightful tortures and with death. The young girl braved the storm, and declared that she was ready to suffer everything and to die for the Faith that she had embraced.

The governor summoned Blessed Gabriel before him, and promised him honours and riches if he would consent to give up the Christian Faith. "The God Whom I adore," said the confessor of Jesus Christ, "has imperishable good things and an everlasting kingdom prepared for me." "But do you not see," said the governor, "all the harm that you have done me? What will the emperor say when he hears that the Gospel has been preached in my palace, and that my own niece has embraced the religion of the Crucified? If you give up your Faith my niece will follow your example, and I shall be praised by the emperor, he will increase my power, and you will live happily with me, loaded with honours and riches."

The confessor of Jesus Christ indignantly repudiated these offers, and told the tyrant that far from obtaining more power, he would soon be deprived of his dignities and offices and that he would be condemned to torture and death just as he had so often inflicted them himself upon the disciples of Jesus Christ. "It will be," said the Saint, "the fruit of your iniquity. If you wish to become richer and happier, leave off persecuting the Catholic religion, be baptized, adore Jesus the Son of God and of Mary, Who gives to all who serve Him true riches, lasting happiness, and a kingdom which has no end." These words only served to infuriate the tyrant still further. Gabriel was bound and sent to the palace of his secretary who had orders to make use of all his endeavours to win him over. The secretary was attached to the Saint who had cured several members of his family. He did all in his power to make him apostatize, but without result. He would, however, have obtained his release had not the servant of God opposed it himself.

The religious imprisoned for the faith, had been transferred from the prison of Omura to that of Nangazaqui. On the third of December, 1631, they were taken to Mount Ungen, to be tortured in the sulphurous and boiling waters of the crater. Blessed Gabriel, who was in chains on this mountain and guarded by soldiers in the intervals of torture, disappeared several times from their midst and was seen at Nangazaqui. When the guards, frightened at his disappearance, and trembling for their own safety, had sought him vainly everywhere, the holy religious was again found upon his stretcher, and proceeded to address them. The Christians glorified God at the sight of these prodigies, and the heathen were astounded. After having suffered bravely the most cruel tortures on Mount Ungen, the confessors of Jesus Christ were condemned to be burnt alive on the Holy Mountain of Nangazaqui. During their painful journey they never ceased giving thanks to God nor preaching His holy law. As soon as they arrived at the place of execution, each martyr went straight to the stake to which he was to be bound. Blessed Gabriel of Magdalene knelt before his and was praying with fervour, when all at once he was rapt in ecstacy and raised in the air, to the great astonishment of all the spectators, and to the stupefaction of the executioner who was preparing to fasten him to the stake. As soon as his companions were bound to their stakes, Blessed Gabriel came down again gently and gave himself into the hands of his executioner. All the piles were set alight and the souls of the glorious martyrs took flight to the Throne of God, there to receive the palms of immortality. This holocaust was accompanied by many prodigies. A brilliant light appeared in the sky above the martyrs and a dove flew for a long time around their ashes.

These forty-five Franciscan martyrs sacrificed for Jesus Christ, from the year 1617 until the year 1632, were beatified by Pius IX. in 1867. (Their feast is only celebrated by the Friars of the Observance.)

After the year 1632, other Franciscans penetrated into Japan to replace those of their brothers who were dead, worn out by the labours of the apostolate, or who had died on the field of martyrdom. Many of them, once again, dyed with their blood the habit of St. Francis, and an immense number of Tertiaries followed them in the path of immolation and sacrifice. From the year 1632 to the year 1635, eleven religious of St. Francis gave their lives for Jesus Christ. Among them was Father Louis Gomez, who was an octogenarian. He belonged to the Observance of the Province of Andalusia, and had come to Japan with Father Jerome of Jesus, undergoing many persecutions and fatigues in order to spread the kingdom of God in this empire. Lastly, when the gates of Japan were absolutely closed to the preachers of the Gospel, five Franciscan missionaries remained behind, but history, which has handed down their names to us, has been unable to say what became of them. There is no doubt but what they must have died martyrs or ended their days amid the labours of the apostolate.

It was a grand spectacle that the Church in Japan presented during this long period of struggle and combat. Countless were the martyrs who, in the face of the world, gave witness to the truth. Their number has been reckoned at two millions. If there were some defaulters, these were largely made up for by the heroism and the number of those who confessed the Faith. The missionaries were to be seen, steadfast and undaunted, leadiug the way, and teaching the faithful, by their own example, how to die as disciples of Jesus Christ.

For two centuries Japan remained closed to all strangers, and absolutely impenetrable to the ministers of the Catholic Church. No one could enter it or live there unless they would trample under foot the crucifix, the sign of our redemption. The Dutch Protestants did not hesitate to buy, at the price of this shameful apostacy, the monopoly

of the trade of the empire. About the middle of this century, God permitted that Japan should again open her gates to other nations. In 1848, she concluded a treaty of commerce with France, and it is stipulated therein that "French subjects in Japan shall have the free right to practise their religion, and, with this object, they can build, on the ground reserved for their residence, buildings suitable for their worship, like churches, chapels, and cemeteries." Pius IX., entrusted the mission of Japan to the *Congregation des Missions Etrangères*, at Paris. Two Apostolic Vicariates were erected, and already there are about thirty thousand Catholics. We find that these missionaries have discovered Christian populations, who, notwithstanding the absence of priests, have preserved their faith in all its integrity, for two centuries. The name of our Father St. Francis, which these Japanese Christians retain in their *Confiteor*, testifies that their ancestors were won over to Jesus Christ by the apostles of the Seraphic Order, and that their ancestors themselves belonged to the Third Order.

All seems to proclaim the coming of the day when the grand words of Tertullian shall be accomplished in Japan. Here again the blood of the martyrs will become the seed of Christians. Let us hope that this happy day will be hastened by the intercession of the glorious and countless bands of Christian heroes, of whom Japan was here below the birthplace or the adopted country. *Fiat! Fiat!!*

September 13.

St. Veronica Giuliani, Virgin.

[1660—1727.]

Of the Order of St. Clare.

This holy virgin was born at Mercatello, in the duchy of Urbino, and at her baptism received the name of Ursula.[1] Her father, Francis Giuliani, was one of the most honourable men of the country, and her mother, Benedetta Mancini, was known for her great faith, her tender piety and her vigilance in training her children in every virtue. God had given her seven daughters but two of these had died. The mother felt her own last hour was coming. She sent for her five daughters, as she lay dying, to give them her last instructions. Then she pointed out to them the Five Wounds of our Lord, saying, that each child was to take one of these Wounds as their refuge in trouble, her legacy to them. Ursula was the youngest, only four years old, to her was given the Wound in the Sacred Side, nearest to the Heart of Jesus, the fountain of love. This disposition was a providential one, for, from her birth the child was most remarkable, a forecast of her marvellous life.

From her babyhood, Ursula seemed to belong more to Heaven than to earth. On Wednesdays, Fridays, and

[1] The life of St. Veronica Giuliani was written by Father John James Cleri, Advocate of the Cause, (Rome 1776, Genoa 1807,) and by the priest Philip Mary Salvatori (Rome 1801 and 1839). We have here followed these two biographers, who drew their facts from the apostolic process drawn up, to promote the Cause of the servant of God.

Saturdays she would only take a few drops of milk. At three years old she was favoured by the visits of Jesus and Mary. Like St. Catharine of Siena and St. Rose of Lima, whom she had taken as models, she mortified her innocent body and passed long hours in prayer. She specially applied herself to the contemplation of the Sufferings of our Lord. After Holy Communion a holy fire seemed to consume her, and she felt herself drawn day by day to give herself to Him in the religious life. Her childhood and youth were marked by signal graces, but the greater ones followed on her entrance into religion. When Ursula was seventeen her father thought it was time she should marry. More than one offer of marriage was made to her. On one hand was the voice of paternal authority, the attractions of the world, its pleasures and its vanities, on the other hand the voice of Jesus was calling her powerfully to give it all up and follow Him. To this voice she listened. After much resistance, her father allowed her to follow the Divine call.

At Citta di Castello, a small town in Umbria, there was a monastery of female Capuchins, who followed the First Rule of St. Clare. This was where Ursula took the habit on October twenty-eighth, 1677. She received the name of Veronica. This proved a prophetic name, for she was to become a living image of Jesus crucified, bearing, to some extent, the disfiguring marks borne by her Lord. From the first day she fulfilled all the duties of her new state of life with humble courage and joyful modesty. Religious life seemed her natural element. She rejoiced in her solitude, her detachment from creatures, the incessant sacrifice of her will and all that helped her to make a willing holocaust of herself to her good Master. The devil tried by every means in his power, during her noviciate, to overcome her constancy. He even employed a strange stratagem to get her sent away from the community, by appearing in the form and habit of Veronica, saying all manner of bad things, to a nun, about the mistress of novices, but God permitted

that this infernal device should be discovered. In the midst of all these terrible assaults, the humble nun turned to our Lord Who was ever near her. He appeared to her one day, bearing His Cross, saying to her, "See, my daughter, this Cross, it is heavier than thine."

On the first of November, 1678, the Feast of All Saints, Veronica made her solemn profession. She also determined to become a Saint, and this act was made with such earnestness and joy that she never forgot it during life. Every year she kept the anniversary of her consecration to God. It was her great feast, the day on which our Lord accepted her as His servant, His daughter, His Spouse, affianced to Him for all eternity. Once admitted into the Franciscan family the first care of Veronica was to become a true child of St. Francis and St. Clare. She was perfectly exact in fulfilling the most minute observance of the Rule, knowing that in this consisted religious perfection and was the means of pleasing God and drawing down graces for herself. The Rule is, in truth, the foundation of the spiritual building, all else being delusion. From the first she practised religious virtue to an heroic degree. She gave herself to prayer with angelic fervour. She seemed to be lifted above the world in a sea of spiritual delights. To unite herself closer to our Lord she humbled her body by vigils and disciplines, she covered herself with chains and was ingenious in inventing a thousand methods of tormenting it, so as to become a victim for love of the great Victim of Calvary. But of all the virtues of Veronica there was one greatest of all, and that was her perfect and absolute dependence and openness towards her spiritual directors and superiors. In the world she had never spoken to her confessor either of her supernatural favours or of her temptations. Better instructed in religious life, she saw how dangerous a delusion it is for souls to guide themselves according to their own lights. She made the resolution to submit everything, good and bad, temptations

or favours, to the judgment of her spiritual guides, thus to avoid the snares laid by the devil of falling into pride and delusions. There was no artifice he did not try, under specious pretexts, to do this or that. Sometimes he suggested that it was folly to put herself under a confessor wanting in prudence and discretion, that she would sooner be freed from trouble if she kept it to herself. But Veronica never gave in to these insinuations of the tempter. How many poor souls, guiding themselves along the difficult paths of perfection, become the sport of the devil and the victims of delusions!

Her fidelity prepared her for the reception of greater graces from our Lord. He tried her in various ways only to console her and instruct her in the teaching of His Cross. In her early days of religious life she thus describes His dealings with her. "It appeared to me," she says, "that I saw our Lord carrying His Cross on His shoulders and inviting me to help in carrying His precious burthen. This invitation seemed like an inspiration more than in form of words. I felt a deep desire to suffer and it appeared to me that our Lord planted His Cross in my heart and made me understand by this the price of suffering. This was how I was taught. I seemed to be surrounded with all kinds of troubles and at the same moment, I saw these pains transformed into jewels and precious stones which were all cut in the form of crosses. At the same time it was revealed to me that God desired only suffering from me. After this the vision disappeared. When I came to myself I felt in my heart a violent pain which has never left me, and the desire I have of suffering is so keen that I would willingly accept every imaginable torment. From that moment I have always these words on my lips. 'The Cross and suffering are true treasures, the purest of delights.'" The figure of the Crucifix was then visibly imprinted on the heart of Veronica as was certified after her death. During all the course of her religious life she bore the sacred burthen of the Cross, and when she

signed her name she always added the title of *daughter of the Cross*. Our Lord's favours to this faithful soul did not end here, we shall see how she became united yet more closely to her crucified Spouse, and how, as much as is possible in this world, she became transformed into His likeness.

In the year 1693, when Veronica was thirty-three, she had her first vision of a mysterious chalice, which she knew was the sign of the sufferings she was to endure to make her like her Lord. This vision was repeated many times in the following years, in different ways. Being one day in an ecstacy a mysterious cup was shown to her full of a liquid, the sight of which caused her great repugnance, at the same time, a deep desire to drink from it. She cried, "When will the hour come, O my God! when it will be permitted me to drink of Thy Cup? I wait on Thy will, but Thou knowest my thirst. I thirst, O my God, not for consolations, but for bitterness and sufferings." One night, as she prayed, our Lord appeared, holding this cup in His hand. He said to her, "This is for thee, I destine it for thee, so that thou mayest drink something of that which I have drunk for love of thee, but the hour is not yet come." He disappeared, leaving on her mind so vivid a representation of this chalice, that it was never effaced from it. By this representation our Lord made her understand all that she was to suffer in body and soul, not only from the devil, but from men, by false accusations, contempt and persecutions, and from God Himself, by dryness and desolation of soul. On the Feast of the Assumption of the same year, Mary, the Queen of Martyrs, prepared her to accept the bitter chalice destined for her, she received the chalice from the hands of her Son and presented it to Veronica. "My daughter," she said, "I make this precious gift to thee from my Divine Son." St. Catharine of Siena and St. Rose of Lima, who accompanied the Queen of Virgins, made her a sign to accept the offering. A little time after, on the Feast of St. Augustine, our Lord showed Himself to her in

company with this great Doctor. The Saint came near her, offering the marvellous chalice, at the same moment, the liquid contained in it began to boil and overflow, angels received the drops in vessels of gold and presented them at the throne of God. When Veronica asked the meaning of this vision, it was made known to her that the liquid signified the sufferings to which she would submit for the love of God, and the golden vessels, in which the liquid was received, represented the price of these sufferings.

On another occasion, being nearly overwhelmed with suffering, she dragged herself to the Church and prostrate before the altar, she gave herself wholly to God without reserve. Our Lord appeared to her, saying, "Take courage, fear not, I am thy support. Look at me." Then He showed Himself to her as He was after the flagellation, covered with wounds and bathed in blood. Again He presented the chalice to her, saying, "Behold My Beloved, behold My Wounds. They are so many mouths inviting thee to drink this bitter cup. I give it to thee and I desire that thou shouldest drink of it," saying this He disappeared, but the chalice remained. After this vision she felt herself strengthened, raised above sufferings and ready joyfully to fulfil the Divine will. Very soon after, Veronica drank of this bitter cup with courage. She drank it in her long illnesses, in the tortures she submitted to from the hands of the doctors to cure an illness they did not understand, from the hands of her Superiors who submitted her to various trials, according to the rules of the Church, to test these extraordinary phenomena, of which she was the subject, to see if they came really from God. She drank it again in her temptations from the devil and the bad treatment he was allowed to inflict on her, and more bitterly still in the dryness and suffering she experienced from God Himself, this was the very dregs of the chalice. God seemed to forsake and abandon her. His light was veiled from her, darkness surrounded her soul, she felt herself placed at an

infinite distance from our Lord, alone on earth. She sought, and she found Him not, she called and He seemed deaf to her cry. She seemed in an agony worse than death, yet in the midst of all she was calm, in the midst of her anguish she cried, "Praised be God! For His love all this is as nothing. Praised be the Cross alone and quite naked! Praised be suffering! I accept all to follow the good pleasure of my God and to do His adorable will." Such are the sentiments of the saints, a mystery to the children of the world. "They see the Cross," says St. Bernard, "but they do not see the Divine unction enclosed in the Cross."

Veronica received a new favour on the fourth of April 1694. When she was in an ecstacy, our Lord appeared, with His head crowned with thorns. She cried out, "My Spouse, give me Thy thorns. I indeed deserve them, not Thou my Sovereign Good." She heard Him reply, "I come to crown thee, My beloved." Then our Lord took the crown from His head and placed it on hers. The pain she felt was unlike any other pain. She understood that this coronation was a manifest sign that she was destined to become the spouse of her Crucified Saviour. The points, buried in her head, were so many invitations to the Divine nuptials. This coronation was renewed many times, leaving visible traces on her head. The pain existed permanently, but was felt more sharply on Fridays, during the carnival, Lent, and every day of Holy Week. After this favour, Veronica felt a greater desire for suffering, and deeper zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of sinners. Having crowned her with His diadem, our Lord found her worthy to be admitted to His holy alliance. He deigned to affiance Himself to her, warning her that the preparation for the celestial nuptials consisted in new sufferings. She suffered from dryness, interior desolation, and spiritual darkness. In the midst of her pains she cried out, "Praised be God! May His adorable will be accomplished. Yes, my God, since such is Thy pleasure, it is also mine. My heart, my

will, my person, all is given to Thee." It was at Easter of the year 1694, that the celestial nuptials took place. After receiving Holy Communion, Veronica had a vision. The King of Glory appeared, accompanied by His holy Mother, and surrounded by His heavenly court, and amidst angelic singing, He placed a ring on her finger, on which was engraved the Name of Jesus. He gave her new rules of life, so that, dead to herself, she was in all things submissive to His adorable will. The nuptial ring was sometimes visible, and some of the religious were able to see it.

On the fifth of March 1695, our Lord ordered His faithful Spouse to fast on bread and water for three years. Veronica told her Superiors of this command, but God, Who desired, by the example of His servant, to show how we ought to practise obedience to Superiors, permitted them to refuse her request. The Saint obeyed quite simply, saying no more about our Lord's commands. However the order was renewed. Veronica, enlightened from above, replied, "I desire to obey Thee O my God, but Thy will, I know, is to do in all things what is told me by Thy representatives. If then Thou desirest me to fulfil Thy orders, dispose the minds of those set over me to direct me." For five months the bishop persisted in refusing his leave, and all that time the Saint was resisting the orders of our Lord, to abide by the decision of her Superiors. On the eighth of September, 1695, her confessor informed her that the bishop not only permitted her to fast, but ordered her to begin the fast that her Divine Spouse had prescribed. Her joy was great at this news, but God permitted that when she had obtained her request, it should be turned into a subject of temptation and merit. The devil was enraged. He did everything he could to make her break her fast, dragging her to the refectory in the night, putting before her all kinds of delicate meats, sometimes bringing tempting food to her cell. When Veronica made the sign of the Cross over them they all disappeared. Defeated in this, the evil spirit tried fresh

devices. He tried to make the servant of God pass for a hypocrite. He took her form and she seemed to be seen eating, by the sly, and at forbidden hours, sometimes in the kitchen and sometimes in the refectory or store-room. The nuns who saw it were exceedingly surprised at such conduct in Veronica, when she was supposed to be fasting so rigorously. One of them seeing her eating thus slyly, ran to the choir to tell the Superior, but to her surprise she found Veronica there in the act of prayer. Thus the cunning of the devil was discovered.

The year of 1696, was marked by new trials and also by singular graces, of which the most remarkable was the transverberation of her heart. On Christmas night the Child Jesus appeared to her holding in His hand a small golden rod with a lance at one end, with which he pierced her heart through and through. He revealed to her, at the same time, that by this new favour she was more closely united to Him. Her mysteriously pierced heart gave forth an abundant flow of blood and was a source of fresh suffering. Our Lord crowned His many graces by imprinting on the virgin flesh of His Spouse the marks of His Sacred Passion. On Good Friday of the year 1697, when she was absorbed in the contemplation of the great mystery of the day, and was praying for sinners, Jesus appeared hanging on the Cross. From His Five Wounds, rays of brilliant light fell, which pierced the hands, the feet and the side of His loving servant, leaving the glorious marks imprinted there, as they had also been imprinted on her Seraphic Father. Our Lord again confirmed her as His Spouse, frequently making her participate in the suffering He had endured, in the course of His holy Passion.

The bishop of Citta di Castello, having been informed by the Saint's confessor, saw the stigmata with his own eyes, and he had the fact confirmed by the nuns of the community, and by four religious, chosen among the doctors of different Orders. They were Father Reginald, Prior of the Domini-

cans, extraordinary confessor to the community, Father Vitale of Bologna, of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance, Father Charles Antony Tassinari, of the Order of Servites, and Father Antony Capelletti, an Oratorian, the ordinary confessor of the nuns. The bishop drew up an official report, which he sent to the Congregation of the Holy Office.

In the spirit of true humility, a virtue which grows in highly favoured Saints, Veronica asked our Lord to do for her what He had done for St. Catharine of Siena, that was, to withdraw the outward signs of the wounds, leaving her only the pain. Her prayer was answered three years afterwards. On the fifth of April 1700, our Lord appeared to her, fastened to the Cross. He renewed in her the miracle of the stigmata, then He removed the exterior marks of the wounds according to the desire of the Saint, leaving the suffering for the salvation of poor sinners, and He promised to give graces in proportion to the pains she suffered. Though the wounds themselves were healed, there remained, in their places, red scars, according to the ocular testimony of many but some days before her death, according to our Lord's promise, these signs wholly disappeared. The life of Veronica was a martyrdom at every moment. She suffered many times the pains of the flagellation, of the crowning with thorns, of the crucifixion itself. Crivelli, a Jesuit, one of her confessors, says, that all her sufferings were real though the hand that adminstered them was invisible. After her death, they found, imprinted on her heart, all the instruments of the Passion, as she had foretold to her confessor.

Few saints have received more extraordinary favours than St. Veronica Giuliani. In her life were united the marvellous graces granted to St. Catharine of Siena, to St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, to St. Teresa, St. Catharine Ricci, St. Clare of Montefalco and many other great souls, the glories of the Church. She was a truly living image of our crucified Saviour.

We have given a simple sketch of the supernaturnal side of Veronica's life, which is more to be admired than imitated. We must now speak of the different offices that she filled in her community, and in these she may be imitated.

Veronica was seventeen when she took the habit of St. Clare and she spent fifty years in religion. During the seventeen first years she was engaged in minor charges in the community. She was novice mistress for twenty two years, and it was during the first years of this charge that our Lord granted her such singular favours. Eventually she became abbess for eleven years, up to her death in 1727. She was then sixty-seven. At the beginning of her religious life she filled successively the employments of the kitchen, the store room, the infirmary, the sacristy and the office of portress, giving edification in each charge. In her dealings with the sisters she was sweet, obliging, humble, full of charity. She was always ready to help them in their different needs, making herself a servant to all, the lowest of the community. In sickness she was their devoted nurse day and night, their greatest consolation. In her charge of the kitchen she felt certain great repugnances which served her with the opportunity of practising heroic virtue. One thing particularly tried her, for example, the smell of certain fish, to cure herself of this she kept one in her cell till it was quite decayed, forcing herself to smell it and touch it with her lips till the repugnance vanished. After this she had no further distaste to cooking them. In the same way in the infirmary she schooled herself to indifference over all unpleasant smells caused by different remedies. These acts of virtue were very displeasing to the devil. He tried in every way to upset her patience. When she was employed in the kitchen he constantly upset the pans into the fire or threw them on the ground. The Saint was rewarded in these trials by the special blessing God gave to her work. Often the food multiplied in her hands. When the community was in great

want she prayed fervently, and the Providence of God for His children was made manifest by miracles.

At the age of thirty-three she became mistress of novices. Full of tenderness for these future Spouses of Jesus Christ, she became like a tender mother. In sickness or in spiritual trouble they turned to her with perfect confidence, knowing that they would find the most tender charity in their needs. When her prayers failed to soften their troubles, she offered herself to God to bear their burthens, and this prayer was often granted. The height of sanctity to which God had called her from her youth did not make Veronica imagine that her novices could become saints all at once. Her first care was to train them in the fear of God and the exact fulfilment of His commandments. She began by grounding them thoroughly in Christian doctrine, she explained the Rule, the Constitutions, and the Ceremonial, and formed them by degrees to all the observances of religious life. She sometimes said to them, "Think much of little things, for they are not, in the eyes of God, what they seem in mens' eyes."

Though God had led her by extraordinary ways, in her own direction of the novices she followed the ordinary methods. She did not allow them to read books on the mystic life she preferred quite simple books, such as the *Lives of the Saints* or *The Treatise on Christian Perfection* by Father Rodriguez. One Christmas night, the Infant Jesus appeared to her and desired her to lead her novices in the path of humility. She filled this office for twenty-two years and formed a great many religious, some of them attained to a high degree of perfection. The community of Citta di Castello became a school of sanctity, a sanctuary of virtue.

In 1716, Veronica was unanimously elected Abbess of the monastery. In vain she begged of the bishop and nuns, on her knees, not to ruin the community by choosing her to govern it, on account of her unfitness. She was obliged to submit, and soon her rare capacity, her wisdom, and her

spiritual as well as temporal power, fully justified the choice of her superiors. Under her government the most exact regularity was observed and the spirit of union was perfect. Our Lady of Dolours deigned to promise that she would be the Abbess of the convent, and Veronica had such confidence in the Mother of God that she had recourse to her in all the spiritual and temporal charges of the community. In the Chapters she exhorted the nuns to consider our Lady as their Abbess and Mother. The abundant alms given to the convent, especially on the feasts of our Blessed Lady, made Veronica declare that our Lady was not only their superior but the housekeeper of the convent.

The Saint never ceased to exhort her daughters as to keeping the Rule of their Institute most faithfully. "It is necessary," she said, "to observe with great exactness the monastic rule, for little as it seems, to keep the exact rules of cloister, with the pure intention of pleasing God, is sufficient to make you saints. The sanctity, God asks of you, consists in doing those things prescribed by the Rule and doing them well. That is to say, with the pure intention of pleasing God." To one nun, who asked her how she was to attain perfection, Veronica replied, "Follow the common life, but with fervour and a right intention, that is enough to make a nun perfect and a true saint." Veronica being herself such an example of virtue, her example was naturally most efficacious in her guidance of her daughters in the path of perfection.

We must now speak of the most marked virtues of this great servant of God. A supernatural light taught her that the humble alone can find God. "God wills," she said, "that He should be sought in this way." This virtue shone in the Saint, and won for her such great graces. Seeing the favours bestowed on her she could not understand how the Divine Majesty deigned to look on her, "on a soul so vile so ungrateful, on a soul worthy only of hell." Convinced of her own misery and worthlessness, Veronica abhorred

praise, she tried to conceal the supernatural gifts with which our Lord favoured her, obedience alone made her manifest them to her directors and she did it always in the humblest manner. "I write in obedience to your Reverence, and to conquer myself," she says, in closing an account of herself addressed to her director, in 1695, "but I think that all these things are only dreams of imagination." In another letter, she says, "I am always in fear and apprehension that all this is the game of the devil, so I write, not that you may believe me, but because you hold the place of God and can dispel the delusion, if it is one." The only visions of which she could speak, without repugnance, were those of our Lord, when He reproached her for any imperfections. As for the Stigmata, which she could not hide from many, she said to those who spoke of it, "God gives certain graces to sinners to convert them, nevertheless they have not produced in me any signs of conversion."

On one special occasion her humility was admirably shown. After she had received the precious favour of the Sacred Stigmata, the bishop wrote to Rome, and the tribunal of the Holy Office determined to test her humility and her obedience, to see if she was really guided by the Holy Spirit of God. They ordered her to give up her office of novice-mistress, they deprived her of her vote, she was treated as a sorceress, excommunicated, separated from the community, deprived of Communion, and confined in a cell, under the charge of a lay sister, and forbidden to go out of it except on Sundays and Feast days, to assist at Mass. The sisters were to treat her as a fool and a hypocrite. The deprivation of the Sacraments was certainly a bitter trial to the Saint but she was always humble, resigned and at peace, in perfect abandonment in the arms of Jesus crucified, rejoicing in the contempt with which she was treated. On September the twenty-seventh, 1697, the bishop wrote to the Holy Office, "Sister Veronica, in the midst of all her trials, perseveres in the practice of perfect obedience and the deepest humility,

without seeming the least sad, but perfectly calm and at peace. The sisters are full of admiration." Father Crivelli, of the Society of Jesus, who was her confessor in 1714, submitted her to many tests, and spared her no humiliation. He had her shut up in a dark cell, and gave her a lay sister for her superior, who told her what to do from hour to hour, Veronica obeyed her implicitly during the two months the trial lasted. This Father, who was well known for his learning and sanctity, gives this testimony, "In a conversation I had with her in which I gave her to understand that she was accused of being a sorceress and a hypocrite, and, as such, she might be burnt in the public square, I found her so humble, so resigned to be treated as such, that I was full of admiration. She humbles herself much more than any one can humble her."

Her obedience was as great as her humility, as her confessors testified. "One maxim she was fond of repeating," says Father Guelfi, the Oratorian, "it was this, 'If God Himself, or through the mouth of His ministers, who are our superiors, gives me an order, the obligation to obey is the same for me.'" Veronica knew that it was providentially decreed, that all private revelations ought to be submitted to God's ministers, who take His place on earth and are appointed to judge of these things. Revelations may be delusions of the imagination or tricks of the devil, but no one can be led astray if they are submitted to the judgment of lawful superiors, Jesus Christ having said to the priests of the Church, "He that heareth you heareth Me." Our Lord told her, one day, in a vision, to engrave with iron, on her heart, the Name of Jesus, according to her burning desire, but she did not do so because she was refused permission by her superiors. She told her Heavenly Spouse, "I am perfectly ready to do what Thou hast inspired, but the obedience I owe to those who hold Thy place will not permit it. I offer Thee this obedience instead of the blood I would gladly shed." This reply pleased our

Lord Who told her always to obey those who are in His place on earth. In an ecstacy, with which she was favoured in 1727, our Blessed Lady invited her to the eternal feast, she excused herself, because she had not the leave of her superiors. When the vision was over she went to ask Father Guelfi, her confessor, if he would allow her to enjoy eternal glory, and, on his refusal, she submitted silently. Obedience was her buckler and defence against all the snares and temptations of the devil. In Veronica the words of Holy Scripture were accomplished, "An obedient man shall speak of victories."[2]

As for her austerities and penances, her life may be called a long and continual martyrdom. We read in the authentic account of her Cause. "This servant of God bore, during her whole life, the pains of hell. She suffered the pains of death without dying. It is impossible to imagine how she bore her excessive sufferings with such heroic courage. These things will never be known in this vale of tears." Her sufferings were so great, according to Father Crivelli, that without a miracle she could not have borne them.

Holy poverty was rigorously observed, in all its branches, by this worthy child of the Patriarch of poverty. The Venerable Florida Cœli relates that she one day counted a hundred patches in her holy mother's habit. From the first years of her religious life, Veronica persuaded her sisters, partly by example and partly by coaxing, to do without a number of little items which were not according to Franciscan poverty. When she was mistress of novices she was constantly exhorting her novices to love and practise this virtue. She made them very careful in picking up every little end of thread, or such things, to look well in the sweepings of the noviceship, before it was thrown away, to see if they could not find something useful. When she was abbess, St. Francis himself appeared to her and reproved her for not using sufficient pains to banish everything

[2] Prov. xxi. 28.

contrary to poverty. Excited by this warning she lost no opportunity of inspiring in her nuns the love of poverty and in establishing the practice of it in the house. She did not allow them to give away the smallest trifle without permission, and was merciless against every superfluity so contrary to the Franciscan spirit, even little presents given by the relations and friends of the nuns, were taken straight to the Superior who disposed of them for the good of the community. Veronica saw the soul of Sister Constance Dini, who had just died, in the flames of purgatory for having kept a number of little useless objects. She ran at once to the cell of the deceased sister and quickly took away all that was superfluous, crying out with sorrow, "Ah! if Sister Constance could come back, how quickly she would get rid of it all!" The biographers of the Saint remark, that in spite of extreme poverty in her habit she was always decent and clean, her appearance inspiring respect and devotion in all that saw her.

We have already seen how large and compassionate was the love of Veronica for her neighbour. Yet greater was her love for sinners. In a vision our Lord showed her an innumerable multitude of souls falling into hell, every day. "The number of these unhappy souls," she says "which fall incessantly into hell can only be compared to a thick cloud that darkens the sky." This sight inflamed the heart of the servant of God with a burning desire to avert the eternal ruin of so many souls created for Heaven and redeemed by the price of the Blood of Jesus Christ. In a prayer, written in her own blood, she thus addresses her Heavenly Spouse. "I beg of Thee the conversion of sinners, I place myself between Thee and them. Behold me ready to give my life and my blood for their salvation and for the spreading of the holy faith. O my God! for the sake of Thy love, for the sake of Thy Sacred Heart, I make this prayer. O souls redeemed by the Blood of Jesus! O sinners! come to this adorable

Heart, to the fountain of life, to the immense ocean of His love. Come all sinners, men and women, give up sin, come to Jesus." Father Crivelli says that her prayers and penances for poor sinners were almost continual. One of her companions states that in her prayers she saw her weep tears of blood for the grievousness of sin and the souls of the sinners. She invented special practices to help them, saying, "Let each of you pray for the conversion of a sinner. Pray God to send all the pain and chastisements they deserve to me so long as they are converted." She says in many of her writings, that to hinder the loss of a single soul she would be content to suffer to the day of judgment, the most terrible martyrdom, even the pains of hell itself. Her confessors testify to the number of sinners converted by her austerities and prayers.

Veronica's zeal embraced the whole of the Church militant and suffering. In 1707, she was invited by our Lord to offer three days of suffering for the needs of the Church. She joyfully accepted the compact for the greater glory of God. For three days she participated in all the torments of the Passion, to which was joined the temptations of the devil and great interior pains. On the last day our crucified Saviour shewed Himself to her, telling her that the actual needs of the Church great though they were, were not to be compared with her needs in the future and the trials to be surmounted later on. A prophecy which began to be fulfilled at the end of the century in which she lived.

Her confessor, Father Tassinari, a Servite, says, "Her charity with regard to the living was equalled only by her love for the souls in Purgatory. Not content with prayers and mortifications, day and night, for their deliverance, she begged our Lord to let her suffer the greatest torments for their sakes. If she could have emptied purgatory by sufferings and humiliations of all kinds, she would have done so with all her heart." The same Father tells us that she delivered a multitude of souls and that Jesus and Mary let

her see some of the liberated souls delivered by her prayers and sufferings. Among the souls delivered by her prayers, mention is made, among others, of that of Father Capeletti, confessor of the Community, of Monsignor Eustachy, bishop of Citta di Castello, and of Pope Clement XI.

The lives of St. Veronica tell us more of her virtues and supernatural graces. They give many accounts of her ecstacies, the visions with which she was favoured, her gift of miracles, of prophecy, and knowledge of hearts. Holy Communion was often given her visibly by angels, by our Blessed Lady, and by our Lord Himself. She was honoured by apparitions of her Guardian Angel, of St. Joseph, of St. Francis, St. Clare and many other saints.

After fifty years of a life of self-oblation, this faithful Spouse was called to her Lord. On the sixth of June, 1727, she was seized with apoplexy. For a month she lay on her bed of agony waiting for death with perfect resignation. On the seventh of July she received the Last Sacraments, surrounded by her nuns, who were bathed in tears. The bishop visited her on the eighth, and gave her the last blessing. Towards midnight her agony began, which lasted three hours like that of her Divine Master. When her confessor saw she was on the point of death, he said to her, "Sister Veronica, you are now at the fulfilment of your wishes." She made a sign of great joy, then she looked at him as if she wanted something. He tried to think what it could be, then he remembered that she had often said to him that she wished to die in obedience and by obedience. He rose up and said, "Sister Veronica, if it pleases God that you should go to Him, leave this world." At these words the Saint closed her eyes, as an act of submission, she gave one look of affection to her daughters, then, bowing her head, she died. It was on the ninth of July 1727, on a Friday, a day on which she had received so many graces, she left this world for Heaven.

God honoured His servant by many miracles. Her

beatification took place under Pius VII. in 1802, and her canonization was decreed by Gregory XVI., June the second 1839. (Her feast is kept on this day by the Observance as a Double, by the Conventuals on July the ninth, as a great Double, and by the Capuchins, on the same day, as a Double of the Second Class.)

St. Veronica tells us, in her writings, that she thought she had lost a day, if she had not practised in it some act of mortification, chiefly interior. She adds, that if souls aspiring to perfection and holiness do not become saints, it is that to become a saint a soul must give up her own will by a supernatural motive, and that few attain to this complete self-surrender.

September 17.

Feast of the Sacred Stigmata of the Seraphic Father, St. Francis.

It is not necessary to relate the circumstances of this miraculous gift, which made St. Francis a living likeness of our Crucified Redeemer. The account of it is given in the life of the Saint, in the first volume of this work.

The place where this wonder was worked, is a mountain, situated in Tuscany a few miles from Arezzo. It makes part of the chain of the Appenines. This calvary of St. Francis is called, *The Seraphic mountain, the mountain of the Angels*, but is generally known as Mount Alvernia. Three churches stand there, St. Mary of the Angels, built by St. Francis, that of the Stigmata, erected on the site of the miracle, and the great church built in 1348, in which the community numbering more than a hundred religious, keep up the church offices.

When Count Orlando gave St. Francis the mountain of Alvernia, he determined to build a church on it where his

religious should say the Divine Office. On the eve of the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, this great Queen appeared to her servant St. Francis, accompanied by St. John the Baptist, St. John the Evangelist and a number of angels and saints. She deigned to point out the place where the church should be built, and gave him the plan of it. The next day, St. Francis went to see his friend Orlando Catani, Count of Chiusi, to tell him of the apparition and they at once began to build a humble sanctuary, which was completed in 1281. St. Francis dedicated this church to our Lady under the invocation of St. Mary of the Angels. Some years after, this church was found much too small to contain the number of pilgrims, so they lengthened it from the end, without touching the part built by the Saint.

In 1260, St. Bonaventure, who was then Minister General of the Order, asked the leave of Pope Alexander IV., to have it consecrated under the title of St. Mary of the Angels. The Pope sent the Bishop of Arezzo and six other bishops to the function. St. Bonaventure, accompanied by all his monks and brethren from other convents, was present, as well as a great crowd of the faithful. After the ceremony of the consecration, the mountain itself was solemnly blessed. The bishops, mounted on horses, headed the procession all round the mountain, sprinkling holy water, and they gave it the name of the *Mountain of the Angels*.

The second church, *The Stigmata*, was built in 1263, on the spot where the miracle was wrought. The holy spot where the Saint knelt when the seraph appeared to him, is covered with a slab of marble and surrounded by a grating. This little church is very poor, quite in harmony with the other sanctuaries of the holy mountain. When St. Francis left Mount Alvernia, after receiving the Stigmata, he went to the castle of Montaguto, to his friend Count Albert Barbolani, leaving with him, as a remembrance, the poor habit he had worn when he received the Stigmata. This pious friend was delighted with the gift. He had it wrapt in

precious stuff, embroidered in gold, placed in a reliquary, and enshrined in the chapel of the castle. For three centuries his descendants owned this precious relic. In 1502, the town of Arezzo revolted against the Florentine republic. Francis, the lord of Montaguto, was placed at the head of an armed body to chastise the rebels, but instead of doing this he made common cause with them. This defection was soon punished. The Florentine governor made a raid on the lands of Montaguto, threw down the castle and ordered that the habit of St. Francis should be taken to Florence and be placed in the church of St. Saviour's, under the charge of the Friars Minor of the Observance. The translation of the wonderful relic took place in 1504. The magistrates and nobles of the city, with all the population, did their utmost to show their honour for the Founder of the Friars Minor. In 1571, the Friars obtained a new convent in the town, called *All Saints*, to which they carried the precious relic. They placed it in their church where it remains to the present day.

The family of the Friars Minor of the Observance have possessed the sanctuaries of Mount Alvernia for four centuries. This holy mountain has been visited by crowds of holy people. By St. Antony of Padua, St. Bonaventure, St. Didacus, St. Bernardine of Siena, St. John Capistran, the holy martyrs of Morocco, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Vincent Ferrer, by Blessed John of Alvernia, Blessed Conrad of Offida, Blessed Bernardine of Feltre and others.

The Feast of the Sacred Stigmata was established in the Order at the General Chapter of Cahors held in 1337. The office was composed by Father Eudes Gerard, of the Province of Aquitaine, who was then General of the Order. This ancient office is still recited by the Friars Minor of the Observance.

The same Day.

Blessed Gandolfo of Binasco. Priest.

[1260.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

This blessed man was, it is believed, born at the little town of Binasco, in Lombardy. He renounced the vanities of the world in the flower of his youth, in order to become a religious of the Order of St. Francis. This was in the lifetime of the holy Patriarch. He was remarkable for his deep humility, his great love of prayer, and his boundless zeal for the salvation of souls. His reputation for sanctity was widespread in Sicily. His life was one of continual penance and rigorous abstinence. Besides the fasts enjoined by the Rule, he fasted three days in the week on bread and water. His only tunic was a hair shirt. He spent whole nights in prayer and was often rapt in ecstacy. He made constant use of the discipline, shunned all idleness, and made a particular study of each virtue as if he had only that one virtue to acquire. Such was his love of humility and horror of the praise of man, that on learning that his brethren spoke in terms of admiration of his virtue, he determined to withdraw to a solitary place in order to escape the temptation to vanity.

Taking with him Brother Paschal, who shared his taste for solitude, they set out together for the wild and rugged mountains of Petralia. On their way they stopped at Polizzi. Here they were hospitably entertained at the house of a charitable lady named Pisana. The people of

Polizzi on hearing of their arrival, compelled Gandolfo to stay and preach the Lenten course in that town. A few days later Brother Paschal fell ill and lost his speech before he could make his confession. He remained in this sad condition for five days, during which time he frequently made signs to Gandolfo with his eyes and hands, as if to implore his help. When he seemed to be at the point of death, Gandolfo, moved with compassion at his dear brother's affliction, betook himself to prayer, begging that God would make known to him what the dying man desired. His prayer being ended he addressed Paschal thus, "I adjure you, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, if you have committed any sin for which you have not done penance, and on account of which the devil is now tormenting you, that you confess it to me, as to a priest who can obtain for you forgiveness and grace from God, Who waits for you with great mercy, and Who is warning you of your duty by your present sufferings!" He had scarcely ended when the dying man recovered his speech and answered him in these words, "I thank God, and you, my Father, because through your intercession I have been delivered from hell. Through negligence, I had omitted to confess certain sins, for which the devil was about to lay hold of me, and he would have dragged me down to hell, but for your charitable aid." He then made a most contrite confession and died in great peace.

Gandolfo then took Brother Roger for his companion. He was a very different man from Brother Paschal. He was full of curiosity in looks and gestures, imprudent in speech and unbecoming in his demeanour. Gandolfo repeatedly admonished him about the levity of his conduct, but finding him incorrigible, he foretold to him that he would meet with a miserable end soon after his own death. The prediction was only too true, for the unhappy man shortly after apostatized, and committed so many crimes that he was ignominiously hanged at Messina.

In his sermons, Brother Gandolfo spoke with such burning zeal as to inspire his hearers with true devotion, whilst, at the same time he taught them the practice of virtue. They were often illustrated by miracles, and they bore abundant fruit. One Wednesday in Holy Week while he was preaching in the church at Polizzi, the twittering of the swallows prevented the people from hearing him. He ordered them to be silent, and the birds, obedient to the man of God, kept silence till the sermon was over. In the course of this sermon, he told his hearers, that it would be his last. On his return to the hospital of St. Nicholas, where he lodged, he fell sick, and prepared himself for death. On Holy Saturday he told those who were attending on him that he would not see the next day dawn. And so it was. On that same day he gave back his holy soul to God with a serene and joyful countenance. At the moment of his death, all the bells in Polizzi rang of their own accord. His body diffused a marvellously sweet fragrance which perfumed the whole house and lasted for a fortnight. The clergy and people of Polizzi assisted at his funeral which was solemnly performed in the principal church of the city, and he was buried in the beloved solitude which he had chosen for himself.

The public record of his miracles contains four very remarkable ones wrought in his lifetime, twenty-four after his death, and two hundred and thirty-two after the translation of his body. The Bishop of Cefalu when holding his visitations at Polizzi, had often been entreated by the people to have the body of Blessed Gandolfo removed to a more honourable resting place. The Prelate had always refused fearing lest he might be censured for too great credulity, but it pleased God to make known His Will to the bishop and his clergy by an extraordinary vision. Thereupon the bishop instituted an enquiry into the alleged miracles, and finding them to be well attested, he gave orders that the holy relics should be removed.

The body had now been buried about sixty years, and the exact spot of its resting place was not known. The workmen appointed to remove the body, on being shut up in the church, were at a loss where to begin operations. While they were in this perplexity, an unkuown woman suddenly appeared before them, notwithstanding that the church doors were shut, and pointed out the place to them. As soon as they began their excavations, the earth moved, and seemed, as it were, to yield up the blessd body, which was found whole and incorrupt. The Bishop, on hearing of the discovery, hastened to the church and caused the body to be wrapped in fine linen and placed on the altar. While watch was being kept by night near the sacred treasure, some swallows flew into the church and dividing themselves into two companies sang in alternate chorus. The Bishop and clergy deeming that these little birds were sent to admonish them of their duty, forthwith entoned the *Te Deum*.

The body was exposed to public veneration and God honoured it with many miracles which made the name of Blessed Gandolfo famed throughout Sicily. This translation, which took place on Whitsun Eve, 1320, is commemorated on White Monday. The town of Polizzi has taken Blessed Gandolfo as its patron. Four feasts are kept in his honour, January eleventh, Easter Monday, Whit Monday and September seventeenth. His body is kept under lock and key. There are three keys, one of which is in the possession of the Guardian of the Friars of the Observance, belonging to the convent of St. Mary of Jesus. This convent was founded at Polizzi, in 1501. It is about five hundred paces distant from that town. There is a very ancient image of the Blessed Virgin in this convent, which is held in great veneration. Polizzi is situated to the east of Palermo.

The office of this blessed man is kept as a Double. Leo XIII. has confirmed the devotion paid to him from the first. The life of Blessed Gandolfo was written sixty years after

his death by James of Narni, Bishop of Cefalu. We have drawn the account of his life from this source as well as from Wadding's Annals.

September 18.

St. Joseph of Cupertino. Priest.

[1603—1663.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor, Conventuals.

This great wonder-worker was born at Cupertino, a little town in the kingdom of Naples, in the year 1603.[1] His birth, like that of his Divine Master, was in great misery. His father, a carpenter by trade, had contracted heavy debts, which he could not pay, in consequence of which his mother was turned out of her house, by the creditors, and had to take refuge in a stable, where her child was born. From his earliest years, Joseph was accustomed to the highest gifts of contemplation, which for sixty years absorbed him in God as if he had been an angel. His parents had him taught the trade of a shoemaker, for they soon saw, by his constant life of prayer, that their child was not made for the world. At seventeen he offered himself to the Friars Minor of the Conventuals, but his two uncles, who were religious in the Order, opposed his entrance under

1 The life of St. Joseph of Cupertino was written by Father Robert Nuzzi and published at Palermo in 1678. Father Angelo Pastrovicchi published, in 1753, a life of the Saint, which has been reproduced by the Bollandists. Dominic Bernino, Bishop of Osimo, also wrote a life of the Saint, in 1722, and dedicated it to Pope Innocent XIII. *Vita del Ven. Padre Fra Giuseppe da Copertino, de Minori Conventuali, descritta da Domenico Bernino.* (This pious and learned prelate was the son of the knight Bernino, who from his talents as a painter, sculptor and architect, has been called the *Modern Michael Angelo.* We have followed the biography of Mgr. Dominic Bernino.

the pretext that his ignorance and want of education would unfit him for the priesthood. He then went to the Capuchins and was there admitted as a lay brother, in 1620. There his continual ecstacies unfitted him for his employments. Absorbed as he was in God, he took a long time to do the smallest office. If they gave him the charge of the refectory he was sure to let the dishes and plates drop, and he was to be seen wearing the pieces round his neck, as a penance. The superiors, thinking him too eccentric to fulfil his services to the community, deprived him of the habit and sent him away.

Joseph left the convent weighed down with grief and humiliation. His father was dying and his mother in great misery. He determined to go to his paternal uncle, Father Desa, Conventual, who was preaching the Lent at Vetrara. Joseph threw himself at his feet, begging him to help him. His uncle treated him as a vagabond and a fool, who had dishonoured his family and did not deserve help. He also accused Joseph falsely of having helped to contract the debts in which his father had just died. The poor man then went back to Cupertino to his mother, who treated him no better. "You have been turned out of a holy house," she said, "choose now between prison and exile, for here you will only die of hunger." In spite of her severity she went to the convent of the Conventuals, the Grottella, where she asked to see her brother, Father Donato. She told her griefs to him and begged the religious to take her son if it was only to save him from a debtor's prison. Father Donato was much against taking his nephew, the utmost favour the poor mother could obtain was that her son should be received as a lay helper to take care of the stable, the Friars thinking he was only capable of taking care of the mule of the convent. But God allowed him to pass through all these humiliations only to raise him higher in sanctity and to shine with greater lustre. For it is written, "He lifteth up the poor out of the dunghill that

He may place him with princes, with the princes of His people."[2]

Thus admitted at the convent of the Grottella in the lowest capacity, Joseph shewed such humility, obedience and love of penance that the brothers began to see what a treasure they possessed. His uncles withdrew their opposition, and he was received into the Order as a cleric. He entered the Order of St. Francis in 1625, and he was ordained priest in the month of March, 1628. It is to be remembered that his superiors elevated him to the priesthood on account of his supernatural gifts and infused science, for his natural knowledge was of small account. According to the statement of those who bore witness at his canonization, St. Joseph Cupertino, was, in truth, most illiterate, and his efforts to study never succeeded. All his human knowledge consisted in being able to read badly and to write still worse. Yet by Divine illumination and supernatural light, not only ordinary questions of science were made clear to him, but he surpassed all ordinary men in his knowledge in the schools, even the most learned. He discoursed on the highest and most exalted theological questions with such a depth of wisdom, and clearness that the most learned theologians were astounded and were never tired of listening to him. One of his Franciscan brothers, who became Bishop of Potenza, Mgr. Claver, affirmed that Father Joseph had made clear to him the highest questions in sacred science, and that in moral theology he had taught him more than he could learn from books.

It is not wonderful that the Saint was so supernaturally enlightened when his life was spent in one long succession of ecstacies and favours. He lived less on earth than in heaven, his union with God was uninterrupted. Father Jerome Rodriguez, of the Society of Jesus, who had talked with him at Assisi, speaks thus in his deposition for the canonization of the Saint. "Father Joseph," he says "lived

[2] Psalm 112. v. 7, 8.

in the closest union with God. His heart was drawn to this union, as gunpowder when in contact with a spark." Father Antony of St. Maurus, Provincial of the Conventuals of the province of St. Nicholas of Bari, to which the Saint belonged, took with him Father Joseph, as his companion, when he went to visit the Province, less for his own convenience than for the edification of his neighbour. The Father tells us, "On the road Joseph was continually in ecstacy. When we met a woman, wishing to see if he was praying, I said, 'Father Joseph, who is that woman?' He replied, 'It is the Blessed Virgin Mary, or St. Catharine of Siena, or St. Clare,' naming such and such Saint according to his interior disposition at the moment. If we met a young man or an old one, I asked him who it was. He replied, 'It is St. Peter, or St. John.' If we met religious, I asked him the same question, he replied, 'It is St. Antony or St. Didacus.' Thus, everything in nature was as a ladder to lift him to supernatural things. In truth, during this journey I only spoke in words, Father Joseph preached by deeds." The Saint was always begging the brethren to give themselves to prayer. "Pray" he was always saying, 'Pray. If you suffer from dryness or distractions, simply say the *Pater*. Then you make both vocal and mental prayer."

The prayer of St. Joseph was continual and from his earliest years it was accompanied with ecstacies. These ecstacies were only the prelude to favours of a higher order, that of astonishing raptures which manifested themselves after his elevation to the priesthood and were most frequent, up to the time of his death. Ecstacy takes possession only of the mind, raptures take possession of both mind and body, the interior man and exterior man. The first rapture of the Saint took place on the Feast of St. Francis, a short time after his ordination. He had been appointed to appear in the procession in a cope. In the middle of the function he fell into an ecstacy, uttered a cry, rose in the air till

he descended on his knees on the pulpit. The people were greatly disturbed at such a sight, but their trouble was soon turned into wondering admiration. The servant of God wished to erect three crosses, in honour of the Passion of our Lord, on a little hill near Cupertino and the convent of Grottella. The largest cross was in walnut wood and very heavy. The workmen could not manage to fix it, the Saint threw off his mantle, rose in the air like a bird, took hold of the cross with both hands as if it was as light as a straw and placed it in the hole prepared for it. On three other occasions as he prayed at the calvary, he fell into an ecstacy, rose, with a cry, into the air and rested on the middle cross, where he remained motionless till the ecstacy was over.

One day he was walking in the garden with one of his friends, who said to him, "Father Joseph, what a beautiful Heaven God has made!" at these words the Saint with a great cry, rose in the air and took a rapid flight to the top of an olive tree, where he balanced himself on the branches like a bird, there he remained in ecstacy for half an hour. Another time he was staying with the Capuchins at Fossombrone, when, walking in the garden with some of the monks, he met a lamb. As he seemed to desire to embrace this innocent animal, a young brother placed it in his arms. Father Joseph pressed it tenderly to his heart, then taking it by the feet, placed it across his shoulders and ran with it across the garden. Presently the monks saw the Saint soaring in the air with the lamb. He remained on his knees in the air for two hours, as he conversed with the Good Shepherd, as he adored the Lamb without spot, represented in earthly form. In the acts for the canonization there is an account of a Conventual Father and a Father of the Observance who were associated with him in an ecstacy, being drawn with him into the air, a fact unexampled in the lives of the saints. These raptures happened in all kinds of places but chiefly in the church. On Christmas Eve,

Father Joseph invited all the shepherds of the neighbourhood to come to the church of the Grottella to sing carols in honour of the Divine Child. The shepherds came in great numbers bringing their fifes and bagpipes, and stationed themselves in the nave to play their rustic music. Hardly had the Saint heard them, than, with a great cry, he rose in the air, flew towards the High Altar, where he embraced the Tabernacle, and remained there on his knees, for a quarter of an hour. The altar was ablaze with lights, but the Saint passed through the lights without being burnt or upsetting a single candlestick.

The very Names of Jesus and Mary caused him to fall into an ecstacy, and rise from the ground. Every time the litanies of our Lady were said in his presence he rose into the air and went to embrace the statue of the Mother of God. For the Saint the ordinary laws of gravitation were suspended, or rather the centre that attracted him was not the earth but Heaven, or, more truly, God, of Whom St. Bonaventure says, that He is an intelligible circle with a limitless centre and a circumference without bounds. These aerial flights were so habitual in St. Joseph, that in the acts of the canonization more than seventy are authenticated in the precincts of Cupertino alone. A book might be filled with the account of those that took place during his life. These supernatural phenomena became so frequent, according to the acts, that for thirty-five years, his Superiors would not allow Father Joseph to assist at the offices or choir ceremonies, the processions, or in the refectory, because these ecstacies and raptures troubled the order of the community. It is affirmed that for only about half of his life did his feet touch the earth.

During the celebration of Mass, he was often lifted in the air. At the moment of Consecration he was raised on tip-toe, and in this attitude he remained till the end of Mass. This was only an ordinary rapture. In the extraordinary raptures the saint fell into ecstacy, lost the use of his senses,

and was drawn up into the air entirely absorbed in God. When the ecstacy was over he went on with the Mass at the point where he left off, without omitting a single word or the smallest ceremony. When he was in these raptures, the face of the Saint bore a look of the deepest devotion, love and respect, which inspired fear in some of the beholders, veneration in others, a spirit of compunction in all. His vestment was so carefully arranged that it might be thought, an invisible hand had settled it. At these moments of ecstacy, the soul was living in another world, the body was deprived of life, the senses of their faculties and of their movement, the eyes remained open but deprived of sight, the ears of their hearing, except to the voice of his Superior. Obedience alone was powerful enough to break the rapture and make the Saint return to exterior life. He was asked, one day, how it was that the order of his Superior was enough to bring him back to this world. He replied that he did not actually hear the command, "but God," he said, "loves obedience so much, that if the Superior only names it, He draws the curtain and closes the vision which holds the soul captive. The soul returning to its liberty, comes to itself, to its powers and its senses." His friend, Cardinal Lauria, a Franciscan monk, asked him what souls in ecstacy saw during their raptures. He replied, "They feel as if they were taken into a wonderful gallery, brilliant with never ending beauty, where in a glass, with a single look, they take in the marvellous vision it pleases God to show them." By these ways our Lord was pleased to enlighten His humble servant. He revealed to him great and sublime mysteries, above all human power to explain or the tongue of man to repeat. No wonder then, when the mystery was unveiled to the human eye, that he uttered a cry, not of grief, but of admiration, and that his soul, hastening to the embrace of his Beloved, drew after it his body also. Surely the words St. Paul uses of himself, apply also to St. Joseph Cupertino, "I know a man (whether in the body, I know

not, or out of the body, I know not, God knoweth) such an one rapt even to the third Heaven. And I know such a man, (whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell, God knoweth,) that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard secret words, which it is not granted to man to utter.[8]

Our Lord's favours to the Saint did not end here, He gave him also the gift of prophecy and knowledge of the hearts of others. There are many examples of this recorded in the acts for his canonization. In the confessional he often reminded his penitents of sins they had forgotten to accuse themselves of, or if God revealed the faults of his visitors, Father Joseph gave them a half playful hint, which was very efficacious. Cardinal Facchinetti once sent a servant to the Saint with a letter. He looked at the servant and said to him, "Are you not ashamed, you, who are in the service of the good Cardinal, to have such a dirty face? Go, wash your face." The servant went at once to confession and returned to the Father, who congratulated him. A man of rank took a young noble to see the Father, one day. The Father exclaimed, "Who is this Moor you bring to see me?" then, turning to the youth, he said. "My son, go and wash your face." The young man went and made a good confession to one of the Fathers and on his return Father Joseph embraced him, saying, "Now, my son, you are handsome indeed." Many more facts of this kind were witnessed to in the acts, as well as numberless prophecies, too many to record here. Indeed the number of the miracles would almost pass belief if they had not been sworn to in the acts of canonization. He cured many sicknesses by the contact of objects used by him. The provisions of the monastery multiplied in his hands. His good mother, still poor, but perfectly resigned to her poverty, came frequently to the Grottella to ask for bread from her son, begging it in her capacity of his mother. "Our mother," said St. Joseph "is the Blessed Virgin. I have nothing, I am poor, but

[8] 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4.

apply to her and she will assist you." He often sent away his mother in this way, and each time when she returned home she found a provision of bread awaiting her. Thus the supernatural tenderness of the son procured help for the mother, who was rich in the possession of such a son.

A violent storm which broke over the neighbourhood of Cupertino, killed a number of sheep and lambs. After the storm the shepherds saw the plain strewn with the dead bodies of the sheep. They went at once to the convent of the Grottella to beg for Divine mercy and to ask help from Father Joseph. He was touched by the tears and distress of the shepherds and the greatness of their loss, and went with them to the spot. He touched the sheep one by one, saying to each, "In the name of God, rise up." All the sheep instantly got up alive. Then the Saint took leave of the shepherds who were full of joy and admiration. The following facts are not less remarkable. During his residence at the Grottella, the Saint was accustomed to go every Saturday, to the little chapel of St. Barbara to recite the Litanies of the Blessed Virgin. The shepherds and poor people from the neighbourhood went in crowds to be present at this devotion. One Saturday the peasants were all occupied with the harvest so that when the Saint arrived he found no one there. This made him sigh as he gazed round the country, covered with sheep quietly grazing. Then he cried out to the scattered flocks, "Sheep of God, run, come to honour the Mother of God, who is your Mother also." Instantly the different flocks of sheep jumped over their barriers and bounded towards the chapel. In vain the shepherds tried to keep them back by cries and sticks, the sheep rushed along and surrounded the Saint, answering each invocation of the Litany by their bleating. When it was over the Saint blessed them and they returned to their pastures.

God was pleased to manifest the innocence of St. Joseph by making creatures obedient to his voice. The following

story is related in the acts of canonization. The Saint went now and then to visit the Poor Clares of Cupertino. One day, when he was exhorting the nuns as to the recitation of the Divine Office, he said, laughingly, that he should send them a little bird to excite their devotion. Shortly afterwards a pretty sparrow perched on the window of the choir, who appeared there at all the Offices and by its singing it seemed to invite the nuns to celebrate the praises of their common Master. When the Office was over the bird disappeared. The sparrow came every day at the same hours, without once failing, for five years, till some roughness from a nun chased it away. The nuns complained to the Saint. "The sparrow is quite right," said Father Joseph, "why did you frighten and scare it?" He promised, however, that it should return, which it did. Not only did it come to choir, but this time it lived in the monastery among the nuns, and allowed itself to be noticed and caressed. One nun took upon herself to put a weight round its leg, for some time it dragged along the weight, but on Maundy Thursday it disappeared and was not seen all Good Friday or Holy Saturday. Fresh complaints were made to Father Joseph. "I gave it to you "said he" for a musician, you must not make it into a bell-ringer. It is gone to watch by the tomb of our Lord, but I will send it back to you." The sparrow came back, just as before, and remained with the nuns till Father Joseph left Cupertino for another house.

During the whole course of his life the Saint had to sustain long and terrible assaults from the spirit of darkness, but he came out victorious from each encounter. One night, when he was praying in the basilica where the body of St. Francis is laid, he heard the door open violently and a man appeared, making a sound as if his feet were shod with iron sandals, as he advanced the lamps which hung round the altar of St. Francis became dim and went out, one by one, till only one was left. Lelt alone in the darkness with this man shod with iron, Father Joseph commended himself to

St. Francis. The demon threw himself on the Saint took him by the throat and tried to throttle him when the Seraphic Father came out of the tomb, bearing a candle in his hand with which he relighted the lamps. Their brightness chased away the demon who quickly disappeared. After this Father Joseph used to call St. Francis *the lamplighter of the church.*

Such singular graces were showered on the Saint by our Lord that it is easy to see the height of sanctity to which he had attained. Now something must be said of his virtues. All the favours he received from Heaven never tarnished his deep humility towards God, or men, or himself. Many times he begged our Lord to withdraw his raptures, desiring to be deprived of their sweetness rather than be exposed to the praise of men. He tried to pass them off as natural defects or stupidity. On one occasion, when he came to himself after a rapture and saw the brethren grouped around him, he said, "Forgive me, I am Brother ass, and the ass is always wanting to go to sleep." Meeting a sister of the Third Order walking with a little boy of three years old, the Saint played with the child and said to him, "My son, say after me, Father Joseph is a great sinner, worthy of hell." The child who could not speak plainly, pronounced very distinctly these words, "Father Joseph is a great Saint, worthy of Paradise." The Saint pulled the child's ear and told him to say what he told him, but the child always repeated the same words, to the admiration of all.

As for obedience, the daughter of humility, the Saint practised it all his life in an heroic degree. He said sometimes to his brothers that if he was told to throw himself into a burning furnace he believed that he should come out of it safe and sound by virtue of obedience. He said obedience is our guide, it is a carriage which takes us to Paradise. It is also a sword which pierces the will of man and immolates it to God, it was the sword which immolated our Saviour, Who was made obedient unto death.

His love of poverty is easily understood seeing how completely he was detached from himself and from creatures. The Infanta Mary of Savoy, full of veneration for the Saint, wished to provide for all his wants. The man of God replied, "Madam, for the love of Jesus Christ, I beg you to leave me my poverty, it is the richest treasure that I can have."

St. Joseph treated his body as his most formidable enemy. He chastised it as a slave, he macerated it by fasts, watchings, iron chains and disciplines, by all sorts of instruments of penance. Thirty years after his death traces of his blood were to be seen on the walls of his cell. He often passed many days with no food except the Blessed Sacrament. It was remarked that he often seemed exhausted and almost dying before he said Mass and that on coming down from the altar he was active and full of strength. These great austerities were a means used by him to preserve that purity of body and soul which made him seem like an angel. God made manifest the purity of His servant by the perfume which pervaded his person, his habit, his cell and everything that he touched. Many witnesses deposed to this fact in the acts of canonization, both among his brethren and seculars who had access to the Saint. It is true that to deceive them and to hide this phenomena he took to using scented snuff, but the monks took it away and replaced it with scentless snuff or some that was very disagreeable. It was then quite evident that the perfume came only from his person.

Divine love was the crown of all his virtues. All his ecstacies and raptures proceeded from Divine love. His heart was consumed by this sacred fire. He was accustomed, after the example of his Seraphic Father, to sing pious canticles. "My God," he cried out "I love Thee so much, even if Thou had destined me for hell I would still wish to render Thee glory and homage such as the greatest Saints in Paradise have offered to Thee, and after having

served Thee well on earth, to whatever place Thou shouldest send me, I should be content." To love, to glorify and to accomplish in all ways the adorable Will of God, was his one thought. As he said himself, "He who always does the Will of God is always praying, we must work at nothing, not even for our salvation, if it is not in conformity to the adorable Will of the Most High."

For such a soul, the thought of sin was like a sharp sword. When the Saint thought of the amount of sin and wickedness in the world he could not control his sobs and tears and felt such keen pain that he sometimes vomited blood. Though his hatred of sin was so great he was full of compassion and love for sinners, nothing was too great a trouble to take for their conversion. He prayed most fervently for them and inflicted severe penances on himself. The Divine law, of love of God and your neighbour, was engraven on his heart and was the rule of his life. After this hasty survey of the supernatural gifts and virtues of the Saint, a word must be said of his residence in the different communities of the Order.

The Saint entered first, as we have seen, as a lay helper, among the Friars Minor Conventuals of the monastery of Grottella, near Cupertino, his native country. He was admitted as a cleric in 1625. In 1628, he said his first Mass, being then twenty-five. The Province to which he belonged was that of St. Nicholas of Bari or Otranto. After his ordination he was placed at the monastery of Grottella. There he remained for many years during which he was favoured with numberless ecstacies and raptures, he worked numerous miracles and gave to all an example of the most exalted virtue. The people came in crowds begging for graces and miracles, according to the acts testified to in the process of canonization. He worked his miracles as a doctor gives his remedies. All the province of Cupertino acknowledged his sanctity. The Provincial wished all the religious of the Order to see such a perfect type of a true

son of St. Francis, so he ordered the Saint to visit all the houses of the Province and to remain three or four days in each house. He set out therefore, with a companion, without knowing the motive of the order he had received, nor did he dream of asking it, blind obedience was his guide, it carried him, he said, to Heaven in a carriage. During his journeys the people came in crowds to see him and he worked miracles as he went. However, the Vicars General of each diocese were annoyed at the eagerness of the people and denounced Father Joseph at the Holy Office. He had hardly returned from these visits before he was summoned before the tribunal of the Inquisition. The announcement of his departure was the signal for general mourning in the town of Cupertino, for himself, he was quite content to do the Will of God, he set out again and miracles and supernatural favours followed on his footsteps. The tribunal, after three examinations, declared that the doctrine of the Saint was pure, and his learning sufficient, however they sent him to Rome to his Superior General. Whilst he was in the Eternal City he worked many miracles and was visited by several great persons. The General took him to visit Pope Urban VIII. The Saint went into an ecstacy as he kissed the feet of the Vicar of Jesus Christ and was raised from the ground in a rapture till the voice of obedience called him to his senses. Filled with a holy fear the Pope declared to the General, that if Father Joseph died in his Pontificate he could certify to the miracle of which he was a witness.

After spending some months in Rome, the Saint was sent to the holy convent of Assisi. He was rejoiced to visit the holy spot and to live near the tomb of St. Francis. But God wished to try His servant, making him feel the weight of the cross which was so dear to the Seraphic Father. The trial came from the hand of his Superior, who treated him as a hypocrite, severely reprimanded him and gave him public penances. The devil also assaulted him under

horrible forms, to terrify him. The heaviest cross was from the hand of God, desolation and trouble flooded his soul, Divine consolations were withdrawn by degrees, the ecstacies ceased, the Holy Sacrifice had no sweetness for him, and a dark melancholy clouded his soul. He confessed, later on, that he had never suffered so much or been so tormented with horrible imaginations. During this violent tempest, the Saint persevered in patience, humility and prayer. He turned to our Crucified Lord and implored His help, but God seemed deaf to his cry. This state of desolation lasted for two years. When the General was informed of it, he sent for him to come to Rome, hoping to give him consolation. A short time afterwards the Saint was sent back again to Assisi and his trials ceased. As he entered the basilica of the monastery, he saw, painted on the ceiling, the image of the Blessed Virgin, at this sight, he uttered a cry, rose into the air and went to embrace the image. The spectators were filled with deep and holy fear. The inhabitants of Assisi were rejoiced to have him back again, and the municipality gave him the title of Citizen of Assisi. The delegates came to bring him the news which so delighted the Saint, because of its making him a compatriot of St. Francis, that he fell into an ecstacy and rose up to the ceiling of his cell.

For the nine years that the Saint lived in this community, the supernatural gifts of God were made manifest in all their beauty. The inhabitants of Assisi witnessed numerous miracles, cures, prophecies, ecstacies, raptures, and flights in the air. These prodigies are related in part in the facts drawn up for his canonization. "The reports of the virtue of the servant of God, were spread over Italy, Germany, Poland, France and other countries, many princes and lords came to visit the sacred monastery of Assisi." Prince John Frederick of Brunswick, (who was received into the Church by him,) Prince Casimir, afterwards king of Poland, the Polish Prince Zamoski, the Duke of Bouillon, Isabella of

Austria, Duchess of Mantua, the Infanta Mary of Savoy and many other great people went to visit him. Every day the crowds increased, people came from all parts, the faithful invaded the monastery, eager to see with their own eyes the worker of such marvellous miracles which were known far and wide. The tribunal of the Inquisition thought it necessary and proper to withdraw this rich treasure from public gaze, it would also test the virtue of the Saint. The Inquisition of Perugia was ordered by Innocent X. to take him to a Capuchin monastery, situated in the middle of the mountains, of the territory of Petra Rubea. There he was told to live in solitude without any intercourse with the world. His departure from Assisi was so hurried that when he arrived at the new monastery he found that he had brought neither his breviary and spectacles, nor or his cloak and hat, but he was provided with them all by extraordinary means. As soon as his retreat was known the neighbours went in crowds to assist at his Mass and to witness his ecstacies. The Church was too small to contain the multitude, the faithful climbed up and uncovered the roof, some even made holes in the walls to be able to contemplate the man of God. Even this solitude could not withdraw Father Joseph from the love of the faithful, so after three months, the Holy Office ordered that he should be transferred secretly to the Capuchins of Fossombrone, where he could live in greater separation from the world. Perfectly submissive to the pleasure of God, Father Joseph never even asked the reason of his frequent change of residence, he was always calm, always unruffled. For the three years that he remained in his new abode, his life was a continual converse with God. His ecstacies were greater and more frequent than ever, it was quite evident that his familiarity with God became more intimate as he grew older and drew nearer to Heaven.

In the year 1655, the Friars Minor Conventuals assembled in Rome to hold a General Chapter, they asked Pope Alex-

ander II. to give Father Joseph up to them, they wished to send him to the monastery of Assisi, but the Pope replied that it was enough to have one St. Francis, at Assisi. His Holiness ordered that Father Joseph should take up his residence at the monastery of Osimo, desiring that he should be kept there in perfect seclusion. Therefore he was taken there in 1657. His journey was marked, as usual, by marvellous favours. According to the orders of the Pope he lived there in almost absolute seclusion, up to his death. Only very holy and prudent religious were allowed to visit him. For the last years of his life his raptures were continual, that is to say his life was more supernatural than natural. In the acts of his canonization it is related that at Osimo, the Infant Jesus appeared to him several times and placed Himself in the arms of the Saint.

The time drew near for his perfect union with his Beloved. On August the tenth 1663, he was taken with fever, at first it was intermittent afterwards it was continuous. He celebrated Mass for the last time, on the Assumption. He then had wonderful ecstacies and raptures, and his body was raised from the ground. He received the Last Sacraments in transports of love. At his last hour a wonderful brightness illumined his face and after saying the Holy Name of Jesus his soul departed to take possession of that glory of which he had seen the feeble rays, even in this life. He was sixty years and a few months, old. His body was laid in the church of the monastery of Osimo. St. Joseph of Cupertino was canonized by Benedict XIII. Clement XIV., who was a Conventual, extended his feast to the Church universal. (His feast is kept on this day by the Observance and Capuchins, as a Double, and by the Conventuals, as a Double of the Second Class.)

September 23.

[1850.]

Invention of the body of St. Clare of Assisi.

On the third of October, 1260, the body of St. Clare was solemnly transferred to the church which had been built at Assisi in her honour, by the Friar Minor, Philip of Campello, a celebrated architect of that time. The precious body was placed under the high altar of this church, where it remained untouched for six centuries, just as the body of St. Francis had remained in the basilica. These great precautions were taken because of the bloody wars in Italy in the thirteenth century.

In 1820, the body of the Seraphic Patriarch had been discovered to the great joy of the whole Church. This made the daughters of St. Clare most desirous to take the body of their Foundress from the tomb. They applied to the Bishop of Assisi, who, after obtaining leave from the Holy See, gave them the much desired permission. The search began on the the twenty-third of August, 1850, and after seven days of work the workmen came to the stone coffin which contained the holy body of the Saint. The Bishop of Assisi invited all the bishops of Umbria to assist at the opening of the tomb and the verification of the relics. This ceremony took place September the twenty-third. The bishops descended into the vault which had been opened, the cover of the stone coffin was unsealed and removed in their presence, and the body of St. Clare was seen by all. The judicial verification being ended, the

Archbishop of Spoleto intoned the *Te Deum* in thanksgiving and the whole town celebrated the happy event by public feasts.

The precious relics of St. Clare were placed under the charge of her children, till the crypt destined to receive them was finished. In 1820, the body of St. Francis on its recovery, had been placed in a crypt, dug in the spot in which his body had rested for six centuries, so also was it with that of St. Clare in 1850, for her relics were placed in a crypt near the place which had sheltered them for the same lapse of time. This was a new mark of resemblance between St. Clare and her blessed Father. On account of the disturbed times, the crypt was not finished before 1872, and it was on October the third, the anniversary day of the first translation, that the relics of the Saint were placed there. The ceremony was conducted with much pomp amidst a large crowd of the faithful, in the presence of Cardinal Pecci, Archbishop of Perugia, who is now our Holy Father, Leo XIII.

The Feast of the Invention of the body of St. Clare was fixed for September the twenty-third. (It is only kept by the Friars Minor of the Observance and the Poor Clares.)

September 24.

St. Pacificus of St. Severino. Priest.

[1653—1721.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

Pacificus first saw the light at St. Severino, a small town of the March of Ancona, on March the first, 1652.[1] His father, Antony Mary Divini, counted among his ancestors the celebrated sculptor, Dominic Divini, to whom are due the magnificent stalls of the upper church of Assisi, also Eustace Divini the learned astronomer. He became an orphan when very young and was brought up by his maternal uncle, a priest of a stern nature who treated him hardly. God was pleased to show his love of the innocence of the child, on one occasion, by a miracle. The servant, through carelessness, had let a barrel of wine run away, and accused the boy of the fault. His uncle took him down to the cellar, scolding him all the time, to see the waste he had caused, but the ground was found quite dry and the barrel was full. At the sight of the miracle the servant confessed her fault and praised the goodness of the child. He became dear to God and men by his pure life, his sweetness, his piety and his compassion for the suffering members of Jesus Christ. His time was divided between prayer and study, and his young companions, captivated by his goodness, looked on him as a model.

[1] The life of St. Pacificus was written and published in Rome, in 1839 by Father Stanislaus Melchior, Friar Minor of the Observance of the Province of the Marches, annalist general of the Order.

At the age of seventeen he offered himself to the Friars of the Observance of the Province of the Marches and was sent, to make his noviciate, to the monastery of Forano, situated in the middle of the Apennines on the borders of the Adriatic. This house, founded by St. Francis, was famous for the celestial favours granted there to Blessed Conrad of Offida and Blessed Peter of Treja. Pacificus spent a part of his life in this monastery. The virtues he practised during his noviciate, his perfect obedience, deep humility, his love of prayer and silence foreshadowed what he would, one day, become. After his profession he followed a course of philosophy and theology for seven years, and was ordained priest, June the fourth, 1671. He was then twenty-five. His superiors in the following year named him to lecture on philosophy, but he objected much to this employment as being too honourable for him and gave himself up to preaching. For many years he went about to all the little outlying villages of the Province of the Marches, climbing the steepest mountains to preach to the poor and the children. His words were simple, sweet and full of unction and the fire of charity, and he drew many souls to God.

Still our Lord thought fit to draw him from this active life of service to a hidden life, for He sent him great and painful sicknesses which obliged him to give up preaching when he was hardly thirty-five years old. The trial was a great one for his apostolic spirit, all on fire with the love of souls, but the servant of God accepted it without a word of complaint and abandoned himself to the will of God. He withdrew to the little monastery of Forano and lived there in seclusion for twenty years. In 1705, his superiors sent him to St. Severino to the monastery of Our Lady of Grace, it was there that he died in 1721. During his stay at Forano he had been at St. Severino to fulfil, in 1686, the office of Vicar, and in 1692, that of Guardian. For all those long years he spent in solitude, the Saint seemed only capable of

prayer and suffering. In this apparent state of inaction he served the Church and souls, by his constant sufferings, his terrible austerities, his long prayers, as well as by his other heroic virtues which he practised up to the time of his happy death.

The life of the Saint was a perpetual fast. Beside the Lents of the Church and the Order, he observed the seven Lents of St. Francis, fasted on bread and water every Friday, Saturday and the vigils of the Feasts of the Blessed Virgin. On other days his meal consisted in a little soup mixed with water or cinders, and a little bread dipped in weak wine and water. He always wore a hair shirt of iron, gave himself the discipline three or four times a day, spent long hours in prayer, day and night, and always offered his prayers and penances for the needs of the Church, for the conversion of sinners, for the deliverance of the souls in Purgatory. By this holy life of prayer and penance, it might be said, with truth, that he peopled Heaven with his conquests.

His infirmities were for him a new means of penance, for though he suffered perpetually from the wounds on his legs, he never complained. If he was asked about his sufferings he would reply cheerfully, "God wills it, may His Will be done." To those who asked him how he was, he answered that he felt much better than he deserved. Everything in his cell and that he used was of extreme poverty, his tunic was coarse and patched, his sicknesses were never allowed as excuses to mitigate the strictest poverty, which he had chosen for his lot and which was so dear to him. He loved his hidden life of silence and when any one consulted him his words were few and grave but full of charity. His face had such an innocent look that every one respected him, at the same time, his sweetness charmed all that came near him. He withdrew himself as much as possible from all intercourse with seculars. When his sister visited him once during the Portiuncula, he only said to her, "Adieu, my

dear sister, we must not lose the time we can employ in gaining the indulgence, let us try to be worthy of such a treasure," and he left her though he had not seen her for a long time. Another time his sister could only get from him these words, "You seem well, my good sister, and you see that I am well also, goodbye till we meet in eternity, praised be God."

Obedience was so dear to the Saint, it seemed fo give him strength. On one day of January the Superior told him to go to Mass at the parish church, about a league from the monastery. The weather was cold and rainy, the roads were steep and crossed by streams, the Saint without thinking of his sufferings went at once with so much courage that his active companion, who was full of vigour, could hardly keep pace with him. Meanwhile the Superior was regretting that he had given the order to a monk suffering from such infirmities, and when he returned he made excuses to the Saint. He replied cheerfully, "But it was not you, Father, it was God who ordered me to go." Our Lord indeed blessed his obedience, for it was observed that his habit was quite dry while that of his companion was very wet and covered with mud.

The humility of the Saint was most admirable. His Superior, to try him, treated him as a hypocrite who thought he could steal Heaven. The Saint kept silence, rejoicing in his heart at being treated as he deserved. A man who hated him, one day, spit in his face, before many people, as if he had been a drunkard. Pacificus quietly kept silence. It was by this hidden and suffering life that he arrived at such high perfection. Our Lord rewarded his generosity by the gift of miracles and prophecy, we will relate a few of the facts recorded in the acts of his canonization.

He was sent one day to say Mass at the Abbey of St. Antony, when it was snowing violently, when he arrived there every one was surprised to see that not a flake of snow

was on his habit when that of his companion was quite white. Another time he had to go through a rapid stream which flowed down the mountains of Forano, when the Saint put his foot on it, it divided, so that he went over on dry land, when he had got to the other side the waters joined and went their way as before. He cured many infirmities, he had the gift of reading hearts, and sometimes God withdrew the veil from the future for him. In 1717, when the Christian army, under the command of Prince Eugene of Savoy beseiged the fortress of Belgrade, occupied by the Turks, the Saint was in prayer in his cell, with a radiant face he foretold the victory of the Christian army to his brethren. At the same hour and day, Blessed Angelo of Acri, Capuchin, was also praying in his cell for the defenders of Christendom and announced the victory they had won. This victory had been predicted many months before by St. Veronica Giuliani, that famous daughter of St. Clare who had contributed to the triumph by her austerities and prayers. It is thus that the prayers of the Saints weigh more, in the balance of the destinies of the world, than the sword of the most valiant leaders.

St.Pacificus was favoured with ecstacies and raptures, both in prayer and when he was saying Mass. Often, after the Consecration, his face was illumined, his body raised from the ground, he remained thus in contemplation of Heaven. The tears he shed in his intercourse with God deprived him of his sight. No longer able to say Mass he prayed nearly all his time before the tabernacle, the church became his home. Soon this consolation was taken from him, his legs would no longer serve him, he was obliged to remain in his cell. There he left the window open so as to be able to unite his prayers to the brethren. Very often the birds would come in flocks to his cell to chirp round him, as if to console him for his helplessness.

St. Pacificus slept the sleep of the just, September twenty-fourth, 1721. He was sixty-eight years old and had passed

more than fifty in religious life. Numerous miracles manifested his power in Heaven. Two dead persons came to life after contact with his relics. Gregory XVI. solemnly canonized him May twenty-sixth, 1839. His tomb is still at St. Severino, in his own country, in the church of the monastery of the Reformed Observance. (His feast is kept on this day by the Observance, and on September twenty-fifth, by the Capuchins and Conventuals.)

September 26.

Blessed Lucy of Calatagirone, Virgin.

[1400.]

Of the Third Order Regular.

Lucy was born at Calatagirone, in Sicily, of noble and pious parents, who taught her from her childhood to fear God, to pray to Him with fervour, and to relieve the poor. The child responded to the care of her good parents and our Lord soon rewarded her endeavours. When she was six years old she went one day into the country with her mother, and as she was climbing a fig-tree to pick some fruit, a violent storm burst, it thundered, the tree was struck by lightning and the little girl was thrown to the ground. She remained motionless and overcome with fright. At the same instant an old man of venerable aspect came towards her, picked her up, comforted her and took her back to her relations. When they got to the door, the old man was about to leave her, when Lucy asked him who he was. "I am," replied he, "the Servant of God, Nicholas Bishop of Myra, to whom your parents have always had a great devotion. I wished to reward their confidence by taking you under my protection and saving you from danger.

This miraculous incident produced in Lucy a more powerful attraction than ever to the things of God and the practice of Christian virtues. Henceforth, she advanced in a marvellous manner in the path of perfection. Modest in her demeanour and in her dress, talking little, watchful over her least actions, she gave herself with great ardour to prayer, frequented the church most diligently, and made it her joy to relieve the suffering members of Jesus Christ. Lucy was about thirteen, when a sister belonging to the Third Order of St. Francis, who lived at Salerno, came to spend a few days at Calatagirone with her parents. This person wore the habit of the Third Order openly and led such a holy life that her presence produced a great impression in the town of Calatagirone. Lucy was full of admiration for the virtue and the manner of life of this worthy daughter of St. Francis, and felt a strong inspiration to place herself under her guidance so as to follow in her footsteps. The devout Tertiary to whom she opened her mind, approved Lucy's project of leaving all things for God, and consented to accept her as a companion. One night Lucy fled secretly from the house of her parents, to join at Salerno her who had been sent to be her mistress in the ways of God.

At Salerno, Lucy was clothed in the habit of the Third Order. She remained hidden in the house of her pious directress so as to elude any search that might be made for her by her parents. There she gave herself up wholly to exercises of devotion, long prayer, austerities, silence and solitude. But God called to Himself, before very long, the holy friend who had so profitably directed her in the path of perfection. Lucy, finding herself deprived of this great help, was inspired to offer herself at the Monastery of St. Mary Magdalene, belonging to the Franciscan Nuns of the Third Order Regular, and she had the happiness to be admitted there. Once professed, Blessed Lucy presented a rare example of religious perfection to all the community.

The foundation on which she raised this spiritual edifice was a most deep humility. The rule of conduct from which she never departed was to seek the lowest employments, to obey her superiors promptly, to choose the last place among her companions.

Prayer was her greatest delight, and while she was working with her hands she never interrupted her prayer, everywhere and always she found means to converse with God. She armed herself with a discipline to macerate her body which she never spared, the ground was her bed, a little dry bread, with a few drops of water, sufficed for her food. Lucy strove by these penances to repair the sins commited against the Divine Majesty and to make herself more like unto her crucified Spouse. Meditation on the Passion awakened in her such deep feelings of compassion and tenderness for her Saviour that she would often faint away in the midst of her sighs and tears. The report of Lucy's sanctity spread far and wide and people came from all sides to consult her as an oracle, and to seek the light of her counsels and the help of her prayers. Her words comforted the sorrowful, brought back sinners to God, and edified fervent souls. Miracles were sometimes wrought by virtue of her intercession with God.

After long and painful suffering, Blessed Lucy went to receive in Heaven the reward of a life of love and sacrifice. Her body is preserved incorrupt in the church of her monastery, at Salerno, and many miracles have attested to the influence she possesses with God. Leo X. approved the devotion which has been rendered her from time immemorial. (Her feast is kept on this day throughout the Order.)

September 27.

St. Elzear of Sabran.

[1285—1325.]

Of the Third Order.

Elzear was born in the castle of Ansouis, a small village in Provence, between Apt and Aix.[1] Hermangaud of Sabran, his father, was Count of Ariano, in the kingdom of Naples, Baron of Ansouis and Lord of several other places in Provence. His mother, Laudune d'Albe of Roquemartine, was a woman of great piety, her charity to the poor caused her to be named *the good countess*. Elzear was her eldest son. As soon as he was born, she took him in her arms, and prayed God to take him out of this world as soon as he had received baptism, if ever he was to stain his soul by sin. The prayers of such a virtuous mother were granted. The child drank in piety with his mother's milk, and everything from his babyhood, showed him to have a privileged nature, and that he was prevented by blessings from Heaven. As soon as his mind unfolded to the first glimmerings of reason, he proved himself to be full of gentleness, affability, modesty,

[1] Father Elzear Borély, Franciscan Friar of the convent of Apt wrote an excellent life of St. Elzear and Blessed Delphine. Abbé Boze took this writer as his guide in his history of St. Elzear and Blessed Delphine, which was published at Paris in 1860. The lessons in the Breviary give no dates for the birth and death of St. Elzear. In the legend of Blessed Delphine it is only said that he was about fifteen when their marriage took place. According to the ideas of some of his biographers, he was born in 1285, and died in 1325, others, with the Bollandists, say that he died in 1323. (See the life of Blessed Delphine on the twenty-seventh of November.)

and compassion for those in misfortune. When he was old enough to be taught, his parents entrusted him to the care of his uncle, William of Sabran, Abbé of St. Victor, at Marseilles. Under so good a master, Elzear made rapid progress in secular learning as well as in spiritual knowledge.

Charles II., King of Naples, and Count of Provence, proposed to the Count of Sabran that his son should marry a young maiden of the family of Glandèves. Her name was Delphine, she was of high lineage and had been brought up most piously. The marriage took place, and on the first day, Delphine informed her husband that she had made a vow of virginity. She spoke so eloquently to him about this angelic virtue, and appealed so earnestly to him to let her keep the promise she had made to God, that Elzear consented to her holy desire, and the husband and wife begged our Lord to keep them in holiness and innocence. Elzear and Delphine vied with each other in zeal and faithfulness in walking in the ways of God. Their days were divided between prayer, spiritual reading and the care of the poor and sick. Part of their nights was spent in prayer. They mortified themselves by fasts, hair cloths, and disciplines. All their thoughts and affections were fixed on Heaven. Elzear confessed nearly every day with many tears. The practice of the Presence of God had made recollection so easy to him that his life was a continual prayer. When only fifteen, our Lord, in reward of his faithfulness, favoured him with visions and other supernatural graces. However the piety of the young Count had nothing austere or gloomy about it. His demeanour was full of sweetness, graciousness, and affability, and the beauty of his soul was wonderfully reflected in his countenance.

When he was twenty, Elzear, desirous of more complete solitude, and wishing more especially to escape from the importunities of his relations, who wanted him to go more into the world, resolved, together with his pious wife, to seek a place of abode where they would be free to follow the

inspirations of their piety. They therefore left the castle of Ansouis, and withdrew to the Castle of Puymichel which belonged to Delphine. At the death of his father, the young Count of Sabran, who was then twenty-three, inherited the lordships situated in Provence, and became Count of Ariano, in the kingdom of Naples. He went into Italy to take possession of his rights, and found his subjects so set against French domination and so ill-disposed to submit to him that he could not at first make any use of his authority. But his gentleness and moderation conquered all resistance, and the people submitted to his authority, and eventually looked up to him as a father.

Elzear would not take revenge, nor would he even exact justice for the personal injuries which he had received before being Count of Ariano, nor would he allow himself to be told who were the perpetrators thereof. "When I receive an affront," he said, "I look at Jesus Crucified, and I say to myself, is there any comparison between what I suffer and what Jesus suffered for me?" He found among his father's papers a letter from a gentleman in his service, advising his father to disinherit him, as being more fit for the cloister than to shine in the world. Elzear would not make any use of this letter, and some time after, at a great reception, having perceived the author of these underhand manœuvres, he loaded him with kind attentions and showed him special affection. This is the way in which the saints revenge themselves.

After a four years stay in Italy, Elzear obtained leave from the King of Naples to return to Provence. His return was a great joy to Blessed Delphine, as well as to the people who lived on his property. It was at this time that the husband and wife received the habit of the Third Order of St. Francis, from the hands of Father John Julian of Riez.[2]

[2] It has been denied that St. Elzear was a Tertiary, it is enough for us that in the legend of the Breviary we read, *Elzearius confessor Tertii Ordinis beati Francisci.*

On this occasion they pledged themselves anew to persevere in virginity, and St. Elzear took a vow of perpetual chastity. Once become a disciple of St. Francis, Elzear recited every day the Divine Office, and redoubled his works of charity and practices of penance. He frequently took long and severe disciplines, wore a rough haircloth and fasted rigorously. His Franciscan habit consisted of a tunic of grey cloth coming down to his knees, he wore it under his ordinary clothes.

Elzear took particular care that religion and good morals should flourish in his states, that justice should be done to his people, and that the poor should be protected against the oppression of the rich. The very poor, and, above all, the lepers were the special objects of his care. He had an exact list made of the indigent families on all his properties, and desired his agents to distribute yearly amongst them a certain quantity of corn according to their wants. He entertained every day at his table twelve poor people, he washed their feet, kissed them reverently, and only sent them away after having addressed a few comforting words to them. Indeed his means were less his own property, than the patrimony of the poor. Elzear made two very good rules, full of wisdom and piety. One for the servants and officers of his household, the other by way of keeping up good morals and religion among his vassals. He desired that his household should hear Mass every day, go to confession weekly, and be ready to forgive injuries. He forbade all games of chance, uncharitable conversations, or any words contrary to modesty or to the reverence due to God and His saints. The rule that he made for his vassals, had for its object to put an end to swearing, quarrels, disputes, and all injustice, to make the law of God and the precepts of the Church respected, to help in a word, the sanctification of his people of whom he considered himself justly the protector and the father. He did all in his power to procure the spiritual and eternal good of his subjects, and

our Heavenly Father, in His Providence, added, over and above, an abundance of temporal prosperity.

St. Elzear was favoured with ecstacies, raptures and visions. God bestowed the gift of miracles and prophecy upon him. His biographers relate a great number of cures due to his prayers. One day he visited a lazar-house, where there were six lepers, the sight of whom caused more horror than compassion. The servant of God exhorted them to be resigned, then he embraced them one after the other and they were immediately cured. William of Grimaud, son of James of Grimaud, Lord of Grissac, was cured by our Saint, who held him at the font and who, when giving him back to his father, foretold that the child would one day be raised to the first office in the Church. After the death of St. Elzear, his godson, William of Grimaud, became Abbot of the famous monastery of St. Victor at Marseilles. One day the Saint appeared to him, shining in glory, and said, "My son William, God calls you to the government of His Church, He has need of you for His flock. Go to Avignon, it is in that town that the Will of God will be accomplished in you." In 1362, William of Grimaud became Pope taking the name of Urban V., and he had the consolation of canonizing his godfather, the Count of Ariano.

When the Count of Ariano left the King of Naples, he promised to remain only one year in Provence, and to return to the court with Delphine, whom the queen wished to know and to keep with her. During their stay at the court of Naples, the holy husband and wife managed to reconcile what they owed to God with what they owed to their king. Out of principle they joined in harmless amusements when it was seemly that they should do so, but at night they made up for this innocent recreation by long prayer and severe penance.

The death of the king, Charles II., however, took place in 1309, and plunged the town of Naples into mourning; it was a heavy grief to Elzear and his wife. Robert, son of

Charles II., and brother of St. Louis of Anjou, was then heir to the kingdom of Naples and became Count of Provence; he therefore went to Avignon to receive from Pope Clement V. the investiture of his states. He was accompanied in this journey by one of his brothers and by the Count of Ariano. After some months' absence, Blessed Delphine, having no news of him, wrote him the following letter, "I do not know if the amusements at Court make you forget those who love you. As for me, I pine, being deprived of your presence and receiving no news of you; and the anxiety I am in with regard to your health keeps me in extreme uneasiness. Pray relieve me from this trouble, a few lines from your pen will suffice to reassure me." St. Elzear answered his pious wife as follows, "I cannot understand why you should be so uneasy about me, when you can see me at any moment. You know that I make my constant abode in the Heart of Jesus, be well assured that you will always find me in this holy sanctuary. You must not seek for news of me elsewhere." This admirable reply from St. Elzear shows us that he knew how to be recollected in the midst of a noisy court, and that God is always to be found when He is sought, whether in the world or in solitude.

On his return to Naples, King Robert heard that the Emperor Henry VII. was besieging Rome. At the same time he received a deputation from the Romans begging him to come to their help. This was in 1312. He immediately sent his brother with sufficient troops, and gave him the Count of Ariano as general of the army. The enemy had already got well into the town when the Neapolitans arrived before Rome. Elzear having prepared his plan of attack, came down upon the imperialists with so much valour and so successfully that they were driven back at the first charge, and the Emperor was forced to beat a retreat and lost the best part of his troops. The great and good qualities of the Count of Ariano and especially

the bravery of which he had given proof in this last affair, decided King Robert to entrust him with the education of his son Charles, Duke of Calabria. This prince, side by side with some very good qualities, had very great failings. His proud and uugovernable temper was not easy to bend. Elzear set to work, at first, to win the confidence of his royal pupil, then he spoke to him gently of what was blameable in his conduct. He made Charles see what was required of him by his birth and the position which he was to occupy in the world. The young prince was so docile to the lessons of his holy and illustrious master, that in a short time a surprising change was wrought in him. Later on, the king, being obliged to leave Italy to visit his County of Provence, named his son regent of his Neapolitan states. He gave him his old tutor, Elzear of Sabran, as his minister, and on him devolved the most important affairs. In this high office, love of the public good was his sole rule of conduct. The poor, the widows and the orphans found in him a protector, who placed at their service his powerful influence and his inexhaustible charity.

In 1324, the king of Naples sent the Saint as ambassador to the court of France, to ask in marriage, for the Duke of Calabria, the Princess Mary, daughter of the Count of Valois. Blessed Delphine saw him depart with sorrow, less because she regretted his absence than for fear that his virtue should suffer some harm at the court of France, she even ventured to express to him her uneasiness on the sudject. The Saint replied that God who had been able to shield him from the snares of the world at the court of Naples, had the same power at Paris, that he hoped all from His grace, that, besides, his intention was to retire into Provence, on his return from Paris, and to spend there his life in retirement, solely occupied with God and his soul.

The Count of Sabran brought the affair with which the

prince had charged him to a happy termination, but it was barely settled than he fell dangerously ill. He understood that the hour of his deliverance was at hand and summoned his usual confessor, Father Francis Mayronis. He made a general confession of his whole life, and after having received the Last Sacraments with angelic piety, he slept the sleep of the just, on the twenty-seventh of September, in the year 1325. He was about forty years of age. His body was first of all deposited in the church of the Franciscans at Paris, and then it was moved to Apt, to be buried in the Franciscan church in that town. Father Francis Mayronis accompanied the mortal remains of the Saint into Provence and preached his funeral sermon. Many ~~and~~ striking miracles were obtained through the merits of St. Elzear, which decided Urban V. to inscribe him in the catalogue of the Saints. The relics of St. Elzear and Blessed Delphine were preserved at Apt, in the church of the Friars Minor. In 1791, they were removed to the ancient cathedral, of Apt, where they are still venerated by the faithful. (The feast of St. Elzear of Sabran is kept on this day by the Friars of the Observance and by the Conventuals as a Greater Double, and on the twentieth of October by the Capuchins as a Double.)

O Lord, who didst grant to Blessed Elzear, Thy confessor, among many other gifts, the glory of virginity in the marriage state, vouchsafe to grant that we may one day have a share in the blessedness of him whose memory we celebrate here below. *Prayer from the Office of St. Elzear.*

The same Day.

Blessed Gauthier of Bruges, Bishop of Poitiers.

[1307.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor.

The martyrology of the Order commemorates Blessed Gauthier of Bruges, of the Order of Friars Minor and Bishop of Poitiers, who died a holy death in the convent of that town, in the year 1307. He was quite young when he entered the Order, he made his studies at the convent in Paris, took his Doctor's degree, and was afterwards named Provincial of the Franciscan Province of Tours. His learning and holiness had won for him so great a name that when the See of Poitiers became vacant, the Canons chose Blessed Brother Gauthier for the government of their Church. The humble religious at first refused the dignity, and it required an express command from Pope Nicholas III. to make him accept it. Blessed Gauthier had been up to that time the pattern of a religious; he now became the pattern of a pastor by his zeal and solicitude for the good of his flock and his charity towards the poor, to whose benefit he devoted the revenues of his bishopric. Our Lord favoured him in this life with the gift of miracles. He cured the blind, the paralytic, the epileptic. A white dove was often seen to come and perch upon his head while he was saying Mass. God was pleased in this way to manifest the purity and innocence of his soul.

Cardinal Pie speaks in these terms of the courage and holiness displayed by this admirable prelate. The blow

given by Nogaret was the first beginning of the series of ill-treatments dealt by royalty to the Catholic Hierarchy. Against this churlish and disloyal antagonism, resistance among us was not long in forthcoming. Blessed Gauthier of Bruges, a prelate whose energy and bravery were equal to his holiness, had the honour of exciting the anger and drawing down upon himself the severity and sarcasms of the despotic monarch, Philippe le Bel, and he had likewise the merit of imitating Pope St. Celestine by giving up a dignity which he had not sought."[1] During his episcopate, Blessed Gauthier had a difference about the rights of his Church, with Bertrand de Goth, Archbishop of Bordeaux. Bertrand became Pope as Clement V., and being already prejudiced against the virtuous snd learned Bishop of Poitiers, thought it his duty to depose him from his see. The Prelate, as humble as he was learned, immediately obeyed the Head of the Church and withdrew to his dear convent at Poitiers, there to end his days in solitude and meditation on heavenly things. The following year, he slept in the Lord and went to receive the reward of his labours. He had governed the church of Poitiers for twenty years.

In his last moments, Blessed Gauthier had made and written out an appeal against the sentence of deposition pronounced against him by the Pope, and after his death, he held this note of appeal in his hands. Shortly after, Clement V. came to Poitiers, to have an interview with King Philippe le Bel, and he and his suite lodged at the Franciscan convent. He was told of the miracles wrought by the blessed Prelate. and of the mysterious paper which he held in his hands. The Pope gave orders that his tomb shonld be opened and that the paper should be brought to him. The orders of the Sovereign Pontiff were carried out, but it was not possible to take the paper from the hands of the deceased without tearing it. The Pope then sent his Archdeacon to desire the blessed man, under pain of

[1] Works of Mgr. Pie.

disobedience, to give him the paper, with a promise to restore it when it had been read. When the Pope's orders were intimated to him, the Bishop half-opened his hand, and the paper was taken to the Pope. It was to summon him before the judgment seat of God, to answer for the sentence which he had pronounced against him, and it fixed the day on which he was to appear thereat. Clement V. was much affected by the perusal of the paper, he had a more honourable place of burial prepared for the Saint, was repentant for having deposed him, and died, in point of fact, on the very day which had been foretold.[1]

The precious remains of Blessed Gauthier were taken from the vault belonging to the religious, and placed in a tomb in front of the High Altar in the church. This tomb became a place of devotion where many miracles were wrought, and there Blessed Gauthier had received immemorial veneration, until there came an interruption, in 1793, owing to the suppression of the church, but the devotion survived in the diocese. The convent at Poitiers, where Blessed Gauthier reposed, belonged to the Friars Minor of the Observance, and was dedicated to the virgin martyr St. Catharine. Near the refectory was to be seen the cell which the Saint used to inhabit, it was called the *Cell of St. Gauthier*. The foundation of this convent dates as far back as 1267. Alphonse, Count of Poitiers and brother of King St. Louis, was a great benefactor, and may-be, the founder thereof. The immemorial devotion of which Blessed Gauthier of Bruges is in possession, has not yet been confirmed by the Holy See. Blessed Gauthier had worked at the Bull *Exiit qui Seminat*, in which Nicholas III. gave an explanation of the Rule of the Friars Minor.

[1] This incident is related by St. Antoninus and other writers, but with some slight variations in the details.

September 28.

Blessed Bernardine of Feltre, Apostle of Italy.

[1439—1494.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

St. Bernardine of Siena when he was preaching one day at Perugia, gave forth these prophetic words, "after me shall come another Bernardine, clothed in this same habit, who will do great things. Many, I know, will not listen to to him. As for you, believe his words, and do what he shall teach you." The great apostle of Italy addressed these very same prophetic words to the people of Florence. By them he meant to indicate the famous missionary whose memory the Order of St. Francis celebrates to-day. Blessed Bernardine of Feltre continued the mission of St. Bernardine of Siena. He, too, was the minister of the mercy of God, the apostle of his country, the glory of the Church, and one of the greatest ornaments of the Seraphic Order.

Blessed Bernardine was born at Feltre, a little town in the March of Treviso in Venetia, about the year 1439, five years before the death of St. Bernardine of Siena[1]. His

[1] Father Francis of Feltre, who was the companion of Blessed Bernardine, compiled, with great care, a journal containing the acts of his life. These notes have been a valuable source of knowledge for his many biographers. The first life of Blessed Bernardine was written, shortly after his death, by one of his countrymen, Doctor Bernardine Guislini, who used the notes of Father Francis of Feltre. Father Cimarelli, Friar of the Observance, who continued, in Italy, Mark of Lisbon's Chronicle, published these notes in his chronicle. Father Pulinari in his manuscript chronicle speaks of Blessed Bernardine's preaching in Tuscany. Wad-

father, Donato, belonged to the good and ancient family of the Tomitani, and was twice ambassador from the Republic of Venice. His mother was named Corona and belonged to the not less good family of the Rambaldoni. The two families of Tomitani and Rambaldoni had both given bishops to Feltre and Belluno, worthy magistrates and brave captains to the Venetian Republic, many among them, too, had made a name as men of science, letters and talent. Our Saint received the name of Martin at baptism. He was the eldest of nine children of whom five were boys and four girls. His younger brother, Antony, followed him into the Seraphic Order, and three of his sisters embraced the religious life. Donato and his wife were principally remarkable for the thoroughly Christian care with which they trained their children in the practice of virtue. Young Martin responded to their care, and from his early childhood gave promise of great things. He was gentle and intelligent and had a noble and generous heart. These valuable qualities of mind and heart were enhanced by rare piety and angelic innocence.

Martin made rapid progress with his studies. At twelve, he spoke Latin and composed verses with great facility. In 1454, when peace was made between the Venetians, Milanese, and Neapolitans, young Tomitani, then fifteen years old, read, in the public square, before the magistrates and townspeople of the city, some verses in which he extolled the blessings of peace which had just been restored to Italy.

ding, in the life of Blessed Bernardine of Feltre, has made use of Cimarelli's chronicle and of the two manuscript legends. We may mention among the biographers of the Saint, Father Bernardine of Chiasteggio, the life was published at Pavia in 1651, and republished in 1664 by Father Innocent of Pavia. In these latter times, John Baptist Zanettini has published at Milan an interesting life of which the title is, *Compendio della vita del beato Feltrese, Bernardino Tomitano.* We have here followed the latter biographer, Wadding's Annals, and the manuscript chronicle of Father Pulinari, of which a copy is preserved in the Province of the Friars of the Observance in Tuscany.

This composition earned for him the praise and applause of his fellow-citizens. Soon after he was admitted into the college of notaries. Donato was delighted at his son's success and sent him to the University of Padua to study philosophy, law, and the other sciences which a gentleman ought to know. The young man was full of zeal in his desire for knowledge, and set himself with vigour to study and cultivate his mind. He displayed great talent in sustaining public theses and earned the admiration of his comrades and masters. It seemed as if a brilliant career was opening before him, but God had other designs on the young man.

In 1456, St. James della Marca, one of the most eminent of the disciples of St. Bernardine of Siena, came to preach the Lenten course at Padua. Crowds came to hear him from all parts, his words captivated all hearts. Young Martin Tomitani was one of his most constant hearers, light from Heaven broke upon his soul, and after an interview with the Franciscan preacher, he humbly begged for admission among the Friars Minor of the Observance. St. James della Marca gave him the seraphic habit on the fourteenth of May, 1456, and, instead of Martin, gave him the name of Bernardine, in memory of the great apostle of Italy, who had lately been placed on the altars. After the ceremony, the Saint said to those present, "We have to-day enrolled in the army of Jesus Christ a new soldier. He will shed a great lustre on our Order, he will contribute mightily to the glory of God and the good of souls, and he will batter in breach the empire of Satan." The self-same prophecy was made by Blessed John Ristori, on the day when St. Bernardine of Siena was enrolled in the Franciscan Family.

Blessed Bernardine began his year of probation at the age of seventeen, in the convent of the Observance at Padua. He had hardly crossed the threshold of religious life before he set himself to practise prayer and penance with the greatest ardour, they are the two indispensable

wings to carry a soul to God. Bernardine's greatest delight was in the most lowly employments, such as serving in the kitchen, washing the plates and dishes, carrying water, cutting up wood, sweeping the house, digging in the garden. With the beggar's sack on his shoulder he loved to go through the streets of Padua which had so often rung with applause at his successes. The devil foresaw the relentless war which this religious was sure to wage against him some day, and assailed him with temptations of all kinds. But Bernardine was perfectly open on the subject with the Master of Novices, and by his advice betook himself to prayer as the best weapon against the attacks of his enemy. As soon as his father heard of his retirement from the world, he too came with his expostulations. He used tears, prayers, and entreaties. The grief of a father whom he dearly loved went to the heart of the young novice, but he was unshaken in his vocation, and he was able to comfort his father and persuade him to make the sacrifice which God asked of him. Bernardine held his father in such reverence, his biographers tell us, that, after he was a religious, if he chanced to meet him he would immediately kneel down and ask his blessing.

Having finished his theological studies in the convent at Venice, Bernardine was sent to that at Mantua. There he lived seven years, during which time he diligently studied the Holy Scriptures, Canon law, and the other ecclesiastical sciences. But his first endeavour was to acquire the science of the Saints, in which he made rapid progress under the guidance of a venerable religious, Blessed Sixtus of Milan, whom he had chosen as his spiritual director. It was in solitude, prayer and study that the blessed man prepared himself for the apostleship to which God was about to call him. Bernardine had been ordained priest in 1463, at the age of twenty-four. After that he had made a few attempts at preaching, had delivered a few funeral orations, and, though he had a defect in his voice which prevented him

from making himself heard well, his discourses at Mantua had been very successful. In the year 1460, the Chapter of Venice appointed him preacher. He was then thirty. Bernardine hesitated at first to accept the holy ministry, so convinced was he of his own unworthiness, and looking upon the defect in his voice as an impediment. His master, Blessed Sixtus, encouraged him, telling him that such was the Will of God. Then, making him kneel down, Sixtus made the sign of the cross on his tongue, and immediately his voice became clear and harmonious, and at the same time strong and powerful. "My dear son," then said Blessed Sixtus, "our Lord has taken away from you that obstacle, like He did formerly from your glorious patron, St. Bernardine, to show you that it is to Him alone you owe the gift of preaching. It is for you now to use it for His glory and the good of souls. But never forget that eloquence is vain if it is not backed by a humble, edifying and holy life. Above all things let prayer be your daily food, you will learn more before your crucifix than from books." Bernardine received the wise advice of his venerable master with reverence, and made it the rule of his apostolic life. The great St. Bernardine, with his powerful voice and marvellous works, lived once again in him. A venerable bishop said of him, "That is not Bernardine of Feltre, it is St. Bernardine of Siena who has entered into him."

Blessed Bernardine of Feltre began his admirable apostolate about the year 1469. During twenty-five years, or thereabouts, he evangelized Italy and accomplished a prodigious amount of work, never allowing fatigue or his constant infirmities to abate for a moment the ardour of his zeal. He went through Lombardy, Venetia, Tuscany, the Papal States, Sardinia, the province of Genoa, the kingdom of Naples. He preached in all the towns and in a great number of villages. Several times over he visited the same cities, so as to consolidate and spread the good already begun. Sinners were everywhere converted by him,

quarrels and disturbances quelled, dangerous amusements banished, usury combated, and a great reformation in morals brought about. The churches were not large enough to hold the crowds that flocked to hear him, he had mostly to preach in the public squares. It was an open campaign of twenty-five years against Hell, a war without truce or mercy against the disorders and vices of his time. Our Lord was pleased to confirm by miracles the mission with which he had invested the humble son of St. Francis of Assisi.

In the second half of the fifteenth century, Italy possessed a great number of apostolic men, belonging to different Religious Orders. In the Order of St. Francis, there was Blessed Mark of Bologna, who had been three times elected Vicar General of the Observance, Blessed Angelo of Chivasso, who had filled this same office four times. BB. Pacificus of Cerano, Peter of Molliano, Mark of Montegallo, Bernardine of Fossa, and a multitude of other religious of the Observance, heirs of the zeal and virtues of St. Bernardine of Siena, of St. John Capistran and of St. James della Marca. Among these evangelic labourers, Bernardine of Feltre unquestionably occupies the first place, and it is with perfect justice that the Venerable Francis Gonzaga calls him the prince among the preachers of his time.

Bernardine was very short of stature. He was of a frail, delicate and sickly constitution, his demeanour was at the same time both grave and gracious, an angelic modesty was imprinted on his outward bearing which inspired respect and won all hearts. The chefs-d'œuvre of literature had been his food from his childhood, and when he became a master in sacred science, his discourses, chaste in style, contained great wealth of doctrine. It has been said that God gifted him with the mind of St. Basil, the gravity of St. Gregory Nazianzen, the eloquence of St. John Chrysostom, the depth of St. Augustine, the sweetness of St. Ambrose, the unction of St. Bernard. Blessed Bernardine knew how to

electrify the masses and draw them after him. When he was preaching at Feltre, lodgings were not to be found in the town for all the strangers who flocked in crowds from Bassano, Treviso, Friuli and Carniola. All the roads round Feltre were crowded with people coming to hear the man of God or returning from hearing him. As many as four thousand people were known to spend the night in the public square that they might hear him preach the next day. When he preached during Lent at Padua, in 1491, rich people from Vienna and other cities, even still further off, took houses in the town, so as to be able to follow his course of sermons. Once, on leaving the town of Crema three thousand of the inhabitants followed him on horseback all through the night that they might be present when he preached the next day at Lodi. At Florence, the public square where he preached was overflowing with people, and many climbed on to the roofs that they might hear him. At Pavia, the throng blocked the public square and overflowed into the adjoining streets, and, wonderful to relate, those too far off to see the preacher were, nevertheless, able to hear his words distinctly. Wherever he preached there was the same throng. Many towns vied with each other in entreating him to pay them a visit. They appealed to the higher Superiors, and, often, to the Sovereign Pontiff, himself, so that, notwithstanding his painful infirmities, the blessed man never got any rest. Like St. Bernardine of Siena, he was always on the breach even to the moment of his death.

Bernardine preached the Gospel with evangelic liberty. He branded vice and disorder wherever he found it, he spared neither the great nor the powerful of the world any more than the lowest of the people. He would reproach princes for abusing their authority, for shutting their ears to the cries of the widow and the orphan and their hearts to the misery of the poor, for not preventing the usury of the Jews which was ruining countless Christian families. Then again he would

oftentimes rebuke those judges who, out of fear or human respect, let the course of justice deviate in their hands. He reminded them that the stability and prosperity of empires and republics rests upon justice. He succeeded in getting certain laws and customs, contrary to Christian morality, abolished. This freedom in speaking drew upon Bernardine the anger of wicked men. On several occasions attempts were made to assassinate or poison him. But nothing could prevent him from speaking the truth. "I am," he would say, "a preacher of the Gospel, and not a flatterer. I would sooner give up my mission than not fulfil its duties, for God said to His prophet, 'Shew my people their wicked doings, and the house of Jacob their sins.'"[2] "Blessed Bernardine," said Cardinal d'Agria, "is the prince of preachers, but he has a heavy hand and he does not know how to flatter." However the severity of the holy apostle was tempered by his humility and the graces of his diction. If he was inexorable with regard to vice he was full of tender charity for the repentant sinner.

One day the Servant of God was preaching at Geneva, in the palace of the Great Council, before an assembly of the chief citizens of the Republic, amounting to more than seven thousand. He was speaking with great vehemence against quarrels and dissensions, against injustice, usury, dissolute morals, and he ended his discourse by these remarkable words, "Remember, O noble city of Genoa, the ancient greatness from which you have now fallen. Of old your empire reached to the confines of Europe and Asia. You possessed the Chersonesus and Pera, which was the last refuge of the Christians of Constantinople. Mistress of Lesbos and Chio, you spread the wings of your sovereignty over many countries. Now behold you are reduced and are straitened within your walls. Acknowledge the just punishment of your sins, of your dissensions, of your intestine divisions. I pity you from the bottom of my heart. However I can only help you with my feeble

[2] Isaias lviii. 1.

voice and with the tears I shed over you. May my tears be even more abundant still to obtain the reform of your monasteries, so that the spouses of Christ, become more fervent, may, by their prayers, stay the wrath of God which your double-dealing has provoked." In his sermons, Bernardine spoke most strongly against bad books, indecent pictures, the exaggerated fashions of dress indulged in by women, against games of chance, balls, plays, licentious feastings, against the follies of the carnival, and all amusements leading to danger and the loss of souls.

He got the disorders of the carnival abolished at Reggio, through his determination. At Todi and at Savona these days of licence were changed by his preaching into days of tears and penance. At Genoa, Pavia, Parma, Feltre, Venice and Padua, he got the public and private gaming forbidden, which had become a source of ruin to many families. At Bologna indecent pictures were burnt, though they were of great value. At Parma, he obtained a decree from the Senate and the bishop to check certain indecent dressing, and he took away and burnt immoral books belonging to the schools. At Brescia, he suppressed races that took place on the Assumption, and which had become an occasion of great disorder. Thus the holy apostle introduced many reforms in public morals, and made Christian manners and virtues respected once more.

While Bernardine was preaching at Vicenza, the governor and the chief people of the city had prepared at the Town-hall, a theatre and ball rooms for the carnival. The Thursday before Lent, Bernardine had exhorted the people from the pulpit to give up these dangerous amusements. His words were obeyed, not one lady out of the whole city would be present. The magistrates, annoyed at their want of success, went before the Great Council of the Venetian Republic and lodged a complaint against Bernardine, and to make their displeasure more apparent they refused to assist at his sermons and went to hear another preacher.

Crowds still flocked round the pulpit of the Franciscan apostle, and his adversaries, ashamed of the part they had taken, ended by joining themselves to the number of his hearers. Then, wishing to make friends with Bernardine, the magistrates sent him presents, but the holy religious refused, at first, to accept anything, but earnest entreaties having been made to him, he accepted the offering and sent it to the poor in the hospital. The time of carnival was thus devoted to prayer and penance by the people of Vicenza. In all the places where he preached, Bernardine faithfully followed a practice introduced by St. Bernardine of Siena, and since continued by St. John Capistran and his other disciples. At the close of each station, he had brought to him all bad books, obscene pictures, gaming tables, cards, dice, false hair, indecent finery, everything, in a word, which could be an instrument of sin. On a given day, he went into the public square, and there burnt these objects before all the people. This solemn act was called "The burning of the Devil's castle" (*Incendio di Castel-Diavolo*). This was done by Bernardine at Feltre, Genoa, Pavia, Piacenza, Modena, Bologna, Ravenna, Spoleto, Vicenza, Perugia, and in many other towns.

It is well known that in the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Italy was almost always given up to intestine dissensions, which brought in their train many a bloody affray in her cities. St. Francis instituted his Third Order mainly for the object of peacemaking, as he had devoted his First Order to the extirpation of quarrels and dissensions. From the holy Patriarch down to St. Bernardine of Siena, the Friars Minor never ceased to occupy themselves about this work of social peace in Italy. To them, above all, is due the glory of having extirpated these sad dissensions. Towards the end of the fifteenth century there still remained a little leaven of the old enmities. More than any one else, Blessed Bernardine laboured, and with success, to put an end to them. Umbria, especially,

was at this time rent by bloody dissensions. Innocent VIII., knowing the special gift which God had bestowed on the Franciscan apostle for appeasing quarrels and reconciling enemies, sent him into that province to make peace there. Bernardine went through all the principal towns, and in all he succeeded, by his zeal, in banishing dissensions and discord. Of all the cities in which this murderous quarrelling raged, none offered more resistance to the negotiations of the holy apostle than Perugia. In vain did he rebuke severely the chiefs of the rival factions, they refused to attend to his entreaties, and went so far as to expel him from the town. Bernardine accepted this insult in silence, and contented himself with praying for his persecutors. They soon repented, recalled Bernardine, and peace was established. On two other occasions, the old hostilities were rekindled in this town and Bernardine hastened back, once more, to restore order.

Bernardine was called to Todi, where troubles had broken out. He spoke in the public square and exhorted the citizens to concord and peace. His words triumphed over the hostility of parties, peace was restored, and the inhabitants of Todi chose the Blessed Virgin as patron and guardian of their town. At Narni, deadly affrays were imminent, Bernardine preached in the great square, in presence of the bishop and all the people. His words seemed to escape from his lips as so many darts of fire, and the arms fell from the hands of both parties, who a few minutes before had been ready to fly at each other's throats. At Faenza, the strife between different factions was so inveterate, that several princes interfered unsuccessfully to affect a reconciliation. Bernardine appeared on the scene, he put forward all his zeal to try and move these hearts of bronze, and, in the midst of his discourse, the enemies rose and embraced in presence of the whole town. The astonishment caused by this event was such that the governor of the town said, "A poor Friar Minor is to-day lord and master of Faenza.

All bow unresistingly before his voice, and wills, over which princes had no control, are bent before the orders of a poor mendicant." In the valley of Lamona, Bernardine's success was so marvellous that the people in admiration exclaimed, "God has sent us an angel to restore peace throughout the country." The Franciscan apostle was equally successful in bringing about peace at Norcia, Siena, Terni, Terano, Rieti, Parma, Brescia, Piacenza, and in many other towns of the Peninsula. Bernardine of Feltre was, without doubt, at this time, what Bernardine of Siena, the great peacemaker of Italy, had been a century before.

Now is the time to speak of the famous institution of the *Monti di pietà*, due in the first instance to the Friars Minor of the Observance, who invented this means of saving the poor from the usury and rapacity of the Jews. Blessed Barnaby of Terni founded at Perugia the first *Monte di pietà*. This holy religious was grieved beyond measure to see the shameful usury practised by the Jews towards the Christians, and how they fattened on the sweat and blood of the poor. By way of a remedy to this abuse, which was causing the ruin of numberless families, he persuaded the townspeople of Perugia to collect a large sum of money and to form a fund from which the poor could borrow, gratis, the money which they might want, on condition that they deposited something as a pledge for the sum lent, and paid a very small interest to cover the expenses of the work. The example of Blessed Barnaby was soon followed by his brothers, the religious of the Observance. St. Bernardine of Siena, St. James della Marca, BB. Mark of Montegallo, Mark of Bologna, Angelo of Chivasso, Cherubino of Spoleto and a number of others, founded several of these charitable institutions in different towns. In 1515, this admirable work was approved and encouraged by the Lateran General Council. If Bernadine of Feltre was not properly speaking the founder of this charitable institution, he was at least its greatest propagator, and for this reason some have given

him the title of *Founder of the Monti di pietà*. In fact he established them in nearly all the towns of Italy, at the price of untold trouble and toil. He restored several which his brothers had already founded, made wise regulations for the management of the work, and underwent no end of persecution in its defence. The writers of his life have named all the towns which owed this institution to him. And it is this work above all others which has made the name of Bernardine famous throughout Italy. This is why he is generally represented carrying in his hand a *Monte di pietà* with this inscription, *Curam illius habe*.

In his sermons, Bernardine inveighed against the usury of the Jews. He showed up all the fraud and craftiness used by them to ruin Christians. He warned the faithful to avoid too great familiarity with them, experience having taught him that such intercourse was not without danger to their faith. At Crema the apostle spoke of the Jews in these terms, "I will repeat here what I have said everywhere else. They must not be harmed either in their goods or their property, or in any way whatsoever. Justice and Christian charity are to be exercised even towards Jews for they are of the same nature as ourselves. This is what I say everywhere, what I repeat at Crema, and what I wish to be acted upon, because good order requires it, the Sovereign Pontiffs command that thus it should be, and Christian charity exacts it. But it is not the less true that the laws of the Church forbid too frequent dealings, too great familiarity with them. . . . At this day no one feels any scruple in this respect. How can I be a preacher of truth and be silent on these things? Jewish usurers exceed all bounds, they ruin the poor and fatten on their substance, and shall I, who live upon alms, who am fed with the bread of the poor, shall I be as a dumb dog in presence of such crying injustice? Dogs will bark in defence of those who feed them, and I, whom the poor feed, shall I look on and keep silence when they are being robbed of what belongs to

them? Dogs bark in their master's cause, and shall I not bark in the cause of Christ, Who is so unworthily treated in the person of His poor?"

The erection of the *Monti di pietà* and the preaching of Bernardine had struck a severe blow at the oppressors of the people. Many Jewish banks, where money was lent at twenty and thirty per cent, lost all their customers and were forced to give up their usurious dealings. In consequence, hatred aud persecution followed Bernardine wherever he went. The kings of finance set everything at work to prevent the erection of the *Monti di pietà*. They sometimes gained over princes and magistrates to their side by bribery. Bernardine's life was threatened on several occasions. The apostle of truth and justice, however, continued all the same to defend the cause of the unfortunate, and to rebuke publicly those who, by favouring the Jews, co-operated in the ruin of the poor.

Bernardine set on foot many pious institutions, for the sake of keeping up the good which his apostolic ministry had begun. He established the confraternity of the most Holy Sacrament at Parma, and the pious practice of the Forty Hours af Genoa, Civita Vecchia, Pavia, Ravenna, Bologna, and other places. At Brescia he formed a confraternity whose members bound themselves to accompany the Holy Viaticum when It was taken to the sick. At Pavia, he established a confraternity of noblemen, who were charged with the work of the foundlings, and several societies of penitents. In imitation of St. Bernardine of Siena, his glorious patron, Blessed Bernardine of Feltre preached often on the power of the Holy Name of Jesus, and exhorted the faithful to have the monogram carved over the doors of their houses. He erected at Padua and in other towns the confraternity instituted at Rome, by St. Bernardine, in honour of the Holy Name. He had an altar dedicated, at Mantua, to the Holy Name of Jesus, and the lord of this town left a legacy for the annual celebra-

tion of the feast. As a zealous servant of Mary as well as of Jesus, Bernardine proclaimed on every occasion the glories, the greatness and the prerogatives of our august Queen. Faithful to the traditions of the seraphic Order, he preached on her Immaculate Conception, he defended it in public, and in some towns he established the feast thereof. He frequently recommended the faithful to use the devotion of the Crown of the Seven Joys of our Lady. At Perugia, he founded, in honour of St. Joseph, a confraternity which had charge of the wedding ring of our Lady. At Vicenza and other towns he established the Third Order of St. Francis. To Bernardine is due, lastly, the foundation of churches, hospitals, colleges for the education of youth, and many other works of piety and charity.

Without interfering with the course of his apostolic ministry, Bernardime of Feltre managed to find time to work at the increase and prosperity of his Order in the Province of Lombardy to which he belonged. He founded many convents of Friars, and founded or reformed monasteries of Poor Clares. Crowds of young men, moved by his preaching, begged for the habit of St. Francis, most of them doing great service in the Church and for souls later on. At Vicenza and Civita Vecchia, for example, the very best among the young men of the place were all drawn to enter the cloister by his words. At Pavia, he himself received into the Order fourteen gentlemen belonging to the best families, and at Venice twenty-two. Pope Sixtus IV. had put the Poor Clares of Venice under the jurisdiction of the Observance. The Fathers took this matter under consideration in the Provincial Chapter in which Bernardine was named Definitor. Some were of opinion that the Order should not undertake the government of this monastery. To these objections Bernardine replied, "Periculosum quidem sed meritorium, tœdiosum sed salutare, et compatiendum esse misellis sororibus in carcere pereuntibus absque ductore, nostroque aliquali incommodo proximorum salutem debere

procurari." "That it was a thing dangerous, indeed, but meritorious, troublesome but salutary; that we ought to feel compassion for the poor sisters who have to live always shut up without a guide, and to be willing to accomplish what is for the good of our neighbour at the cost of some slight personal inconvenience." Moreover it was a formal command from the Pope. Bernardine was, therefore, charged with the direction of these nuns, and after having been engaged for some time in restoring strict observance, he made Father Peter of Mantua take his place and returned himself to his apostolic labours. We have already mentioned that the blessed man founded or reformed several convents of Clarisses and established therein the First Rule of St. Clare.

Bernardine filled successively all the offices of his Province. He taught humanities, philosophy and theology. In the beginning he filled the office of secretary to Blessed Louis Gonzaga, Provincial of the Observance in Lombardy. He was successively Vicar of the convent at Mantua, in 1469, Guardian of the convents of Feltre, in 1471, of Trent, in 1473, of Padua, in 1478, Definitor of his Province, in 1481, and, lastly, Provincial, in 1483. In these various employments he showed himself to be a worthy heir of the spirit of St. Francis and of St. Bernardine, his glorious model. In 1472, he accompanied Blessed Louis Gonzaga, his Provincial, to Aquila, as secretary, and assisted at the translation of the body of St. Bernardine of Siena. When returning, they embarked on the Adriatic, but a storm obliged them to land on the shores of the March of Ancona. They stopped at Fermo for the sake of visiting St. James della Marca, who was seriously ill and was near the end of his holy and laborious career. Bernardine conversed for a long time with him, whom he looked upon as his master and spiritual father. St. James della Marca told Bernardine of the troubles, sufferings and persecutions which awaited him in his labours for the glory of God and the good of souls.

As soon as he arrived in Rome, Bernardine fell seriously ill, a report of his death, even, reached Venice, and the religious celebrated a funeral service for him. Having at last got well, he went to Venice and began preaching again, until, as secretary to Blessed Louis Gonzaga, he had to accompany him on his visit through the Province.

Among the many virtues to be remarked in our blessed Saint, the chief one was a deep humility. No one could have had a greater dislike of applause or of honour. Obedience alone could make him accept the office of Provincial. When summoned in 1484, to the General Chapter of the Cismontane Observance, held on Mount Alvernia, he implored Blessed Angelo of Chivasso, who had just been elected, for the third time, Vicar General of the Observance, to relieve him of the government of his Province. Blessed Angelo would not deprive his brethren of a Superior, who was as clever in the management of affairs as he was eminent in virtue, and he sent him back to govern his Province of Lombardy. Sixtus IV. and Innocent VIII., by way of acknowledgment of the great services which Bernardine had rendered to the Church, wished to grant him certain great privileges. Blessed Bernardine declared that he wished for no other grace than the forgiveness of his sins. Innocent VIII. one day proposed to give him some very extensive powers for confession, so as to dispense him from having to appeal to the bishop. The humble religious likewise refused this favour, wishing, as he said, to depend on the bishops in every case where the law of the Church required it, the bishops being the ordinary pastors of the Christian people. The Pope, marvelling at such deep humility, could not help exclaiming, "Here is a true and worthy son of St. Francis."

Every soul was equally dear to the heart of Bernardine. His solicitude was the same for the poor and the little ones of this world as for the great. He would often on leaving the pulpit in some great city, where his words had electrified

crowds, go and evangelize the smallest villages or catechize little children. When he was put over his brothers as Guardian, our Saint would look upon himself as their servant, himself fulfilling the lowliest offices of the community. With a sack over his shoulder he would go and beg from door to door for his brothers. To those who tried to dissuade him from going begging he would say, "I only do what the most excellent masters have taught me, the venerable Fathers Sixtus of Milan and Louis Gonzaga. The first was Guardian of the convent at Mantua and confessor to the prince of that town, the second was descended from the princely family of Gonzaga, and for long filled the office of Provincial. Now, we have seen these two great Servants of God take the beggar's sack and go begging from door to door." Blessed Louis Gonzaga, of the house of the lords of Mantua, was, as we have said, Provincial of the Observance, in Lombardy. He was famous, says the Menologium of the Order, for his holiness and for the miracles which he wrought during his life and after his death, which happened in 1480. In the course of the next century Blessed Louis Gonzaga had for his imitators two of his great nephews, St. Louis Gonzaga, who entered the Society of Jesus, and his cousin, our Venerable Francis Gonzaga, who also became Provincial of the Observance in Lombardy, Minister General of the whole Order, and terminated his holy and toilsome career as Bishop of Mantua.

The spirit of penance was joined to humility in Bernardine of Feltre. His love of suffering was not satisfied with his constant infirmities and incessant fatigues, but he must needs load his body with voluntary penances, such as fasts, watchings and the most severe austerities. It was by the penance which accompanied his prayer that Bernardine drew down from Heaven that powerful grace which subdues the hardness of souls, dissipates darkness and brings them to repentance. God was pleased to favour His zealous servant with ecstacies, raptures and the gift

of miracles. He bestowed on him prophetic lights and unveiled to his sight, on various occasions, the secrets of the future. We will relate a few of the many prodigies by which God gave authority to the mission of this hero of the Gospel.

Bernardine cured a great number of sick, and delivered those who were possessed of the devil, by invoking the Holy Name of Jesus. Sometimes a piece of his clothes, or the remains of his meal brought to the sick, alleviated their sufferings. It would often happen that pieces were cut off his tunic to be preserved as relics. He also brought back the dead to life. While he was preaching in Lent in the Cathedral at Pavia, Bernardine begged a fisherman, who had come to confession to him, to go the next morning and cast his nets into the Ticino, and to bring him into the church, where he would be waiting for him, the first object which he should draw out of the water. Glad to be able to do something for the Father, the fisherman went early in the morning to the river, and, on drawing in his net, the very first time, he brought out the body of a newly born child. Being surprised at his strange find, and not knowing exactly what to do, he made up his mind to bury the body in the sand. He then again threw out his net, and took a fine fish which he carried off joyfully to the Father. "This is not the first thing which you took," said the blessed man, "go and bring me what you found." The fisherman ran to the river side and soon returned bringing the body of the child. Bernardine took it, placed it on the altar of St. Anne, and began to pray. After an instant the child came back to life, in presence of a large crowd who had come to assist at the sermon. Bernardine baptized it, and placed it again on the altar, when it slept again the sleep of death. He then sent the fish to a poor sick man who as soon as he had tasted it, was cured on the spot.

On a great many occasions, it was quite plain that the Hand of God came down heavily on his persecutors. Some-

times on those who opposed his foundation of the *Monti di pietà*, one of his principal works, sometimes on those who had scorned his warnings on the subject of gaming, balls, usury, or quarrels. He foretold to the Duke of Calabria, brother of Ferdinand, King of Naples, that if he did not cease his unjust wars, and give up oppressing the poor and favouring the Jews, he would be driven out from his kingdom as a punishment for his sins. The duke made no account of the warnings of the man of God. On the twenty-first of February, 1495, Charles VIII. made his entry into Naples, and expelled him from the kingdom with his brother, the king.

In one of his last sermons at Pavia, Bernardine foretold, as St. Bernardine of Siena had already done before him, the ills which were coming upon his country, and, leaning his head on the pulpit, he exclaimed, "Do you not hear, O Pavia, the French shoeing their horses to come and invade Italy?" A few months had barely elapsed before the prophecy of Bernardine was realized. In the course of 1494, Charles VIII., King of France, arrived in the Peninsula, at the head of a splendid army, took Lombardy, Tuscany, and, as we have just said, the kingdom of Naples. Bernardine had also foretold that the victorious French, after having chastised Italy, would find their graves there. This event was realized when the allied Italian princes, backed by the Emperor of Austria, cut off the retreat of the army of Charles VIII., in 1495, at Fornuovo, near Parma, and made them sustain a disastrous defeat. Bernardine also foretold the calamities which were to befall the towns of Genoa, Milan, Perugia, Assisi, Crema, Feltre and Florence.

In the year 1475, Bernardine was preaching the Lenten course at Trent, and he attacked the Jews very strenuously. Some among his hearers blamed him for attacking persons, whose religion was false, it is true, but who, in the main, were honest people. Blessed Bernardine replied, "You are not aware of the crime which these so-called honest people

are meditating against you. The feast of Easter will not pass before you have learnt something of it." Now, during Holy Week, when the Christians were about to celebrate the mysteries of our Saviour's Passion, the Jews secretly carried off a little Christian child, of two and a half, named Simon, they crucified him, and made him die in terrible torture. The grief-stricken mother sought her child everywhere. Children's voices were heard, telling her that he had been put to death by the Jews. Bernardine declared that these voices came from Heaven and that they spoke the truth. The shocking crime was indeed discovered and the fact legally proved. The relics of the little martyr were piously collected and honoured by the faithful.[3]

While Bernardine was preaching the Divine word to the people, God was often pleased to give authority to his mission by wonderful signs. A bright star appeared above his head every time that he preached at Perugia, from the first of August until the end of September. At Lucca, a shining light surrounded him. When he was preaching against the Jews, at Florence, sparks seemed to issue from his mouth. Legions of angels appeared in the skies and seemed to listen attentively to his words when he was preaching. Another time angels placed a crown upon his head. At Aquila, a holy soul saw the angel of God holding an open book before him. His preaching was sometimes heard distinctly by persons a mile off. One day when he was preaching in the open air, he stayed the rain which was about to fall on his hearers. On another occasion the Jews had cleverly sawed in two the pillars which supported his pulpit, meaning to cause a serious accident when he mounted it. Bernardine was warned of it by Divine light, but he went up into it all the same and the hopes of his enemies were frustrated.

[3] Surius, in the second volume of the Lives of the Saints, and the Bollandists, mention this holy little martyr. His name is inscribed in the Roman Martyrology.

As he was preaching one day at Pavia, he stopped short, fell into an ecstacy, and, taking up his discourse again after the lapse of a quarter of an hour, he told his hearers that he had been attending the funeral of his father. It became known afterwards that his father was dead and that, in point of fact, his funeral took place at the time stated by the servant of God. Bernardine was also favoured with the gift of tongues. The General Chapter of the Cismontane Observance was assembled at Assisi in 1487, and Blessed Bernardine was appointed to deliver a discourse in presence of this august assembly. He spoke in Italian, and the religious who came from Austria, Poland, and Bohemia heard him each in his own tongue. The servant of God had, one day, to cross the Po, in going to a town which he was to evangelize. The river had overflowed its banks and the surrounding country was under water. Bernardine begged the boatmen to have the charity to take him and his companion over in their boat. None of them would consent to oblige him because he had no money to pay the passage. The blessed man then turned to God with confidence, and throwing his mantle on the waters, made use of it for a boat, and he and his companion got over to the opposite bank. The boatmen were awestruck at the prodigy and bewailed themselves that they had refused to do the service asked of them by the friends of God. If we were not limited for space we might speak of the ecstacies and raptures of Blessed Bernardine and of a number of other miracles performed by this great wonder-worker.

At last the hour drew near when the indefatigable apostle was to go and rest in the Bosom of God, after all the works in which he had spent himself for His glory. The good and faithful servant was to be called to enter into the glory of his Lord. Bernardine was warned by revelation of the hour of his release. It was on the twenty-eighth of September, 1494, that he slept sweetly the sleep of the just, at the convent of the Observance at Pavia. The sweet Names of Jesus and

Mary were his last words. At the same moment, the angels were heard chanting sweet melodies. Bernardine was about fifty-five, and had spent thirty-eight years in religion. At the news of his death, magnificent funeral services were celebrated for him at Padua, Mantua, Verona, Vicenza, Feltre, and in a number of other towns in the Peninsula. His venerable remains were exposed in the church of the Observance at Pavia, and the people came in crowds to venerate and invoke their apostle. A great many cures were wrought at his tomb. His biographers tell us that many little children were restored to life by his intercession. Innocent X. approved devotion to the great wonderworker, and Benedict XIII. allowed an Office in his honour to the Franciscan Order, and to the towns of Pavia and Feltre which took him for their patron. The Order is at present occupied with the Cause of his canonization before the Holy See.

More than a century after his death the body of Bernardine was found incorrupt, and this prodigy continues to our day. His tomb was in the church of the Observance at Pavia until the first suppression of Religious Orders in Italy. In 1805, this tomb was removed to the church of Holy Cross, and, in 1811, to the parish church of Mount Carmel, where it is at present. The writings of the apostle of Italy, have in part been lost, some sermons preached at Venice, in 1532, are all that remain. It was St Bernardine of Feltre who composed the beautiful prayer— .

Anima Christi sanctifica me.
Corpus Christi, salva me.
Sanguis Christi inebria me.
Aqua lateris Christi lava me.
Passio Christi conforta me
O Bone Jesu, exaudi me.
Intra vulnera tua absconde me.
Ne permittas me separari a te.
Ab hoste maligno defende me.

In hora mortis meæ voca me.
Et jube me venire ad te.
Ut cum sanctis tuis laudem te.
In sæcula sæculorum. Amen.

He used to recommend his brothers to say this prayer after offering Mass and after Communion.[4]

In finishing this sketch of the life of Blessed Bernardine, we may add that in these latter times, a statue has been put up by the town of Feltre to the most eminent of her sons.

(The feast of Blessed Bernardine of Feltre is kept on this day by the Franciscans of the Observance and by the Capuchins as a Double, and by the Conventuals as a Semi Double.)

[4] St. Ignatius made constant use of this prayer. Pius IX., in a decree of the ninth of January, 1854, granted three hundred days' indulgence to the faithful, *each time* they recite it with a contrite heart, and an indulgence of seven years after Holy Communion.

October 1.

Blessed Louise of Savoy, Widow.

[1461—1503.]

Of the Order of Poor Clares.

This illustrious princess was born in the year 1461. She belonged to the ancient house of Savoy in which piety has always been hereditary. Her parents were Blessed Amadeus IX., Duke of Savoy, and Yolande, daughter of Charles VII., King of France, and sister of Louis XI.[1] From her childhood Louise showed a marked love for prayer and solitude, and her life was thus early made beautiful by its twofold lustre of simplicity and innocence. This princess, "says Father Fodéré," was from infancy so given to devotion that she made her father's house seem almost

[1] The life of Blessed Louise of Savoy was written four years after her death, by Catharine of Saulx, a daughter of one of the most noble families of Burgundy. She was maid of honour to the princess Louise and followed her to the convent of Orbe which she governed as Abbess for some years. The manuscript is kept among the records of the community of Orbe, since removed to Evian, it bears the following title: "Life of the most excellent, powerful, and illustrious lady, Madame Louise of Savoy, religious in the Poor Clare convent at Orbe, written in 1507, by one of the Nuns." Our sketch of her life is taken from this biography, from the edition published in 1860, by the Abbé Jeanneret. On her mother's side, Louise of Savoy was niece to Louis XI. and cousin to St. Jane of Valois. Her father was grandson of Amadeus VIII. who raised Savoy into a duchy in 1416. In 1463, he withdrew to Ripaille and was elected antipope by the insubordinate prelates of the false Council of Bâle. He afterwards acknowledged his error and ended his days in penance.

like a convent. She commonly wore haircloth, and it was her custom to fast on bread and water on all the vigils of our Lady's feasts.[2] Catharine de Saulx, one of her maids of honour, speaks thus of her charity, "She was sweet, gentle, and meek and was very loveable and gracious to every one with whom she had to deal. She had scarcely reached her ninth year when God called her father to his eternal reward, her education was then left in the hands of her mother under whose care Louise made great progress. Thus it is not to be wondered at that the child wholly busied with the thought of serving and pleasing God should have desired to consecrate herself to Him by a vow of chastity. But God willed otherwise and in obedience to His will and to that of her uncle, Louis XI., to whose guardianship she had been entrusted at her mother's death, the young princess consented to wed Hugh, prince of Châlon.

This youthful prince was lord of Castelguion, of Orbe, of Nozeroy, and of other places. He was yet more remarkable for his virtues than for the power he possessed, and he well deserved to have a saint given to him for a helpmate. The holy couple fixed their court at Nozeroy. Blessed Louise seemed only to live in order to work for God's glory and to spread devotion through her vast domains. By the decree of beatification, we learn that she adopted a chaste and holy manner of life in the conjugal state, that she despised vanity and elegance of attire, that she reformed the dress of the ladies of her court, and, by her modesty and gravity, she put down a too great freedom of speech, and that she endeavoured, not only by example, but also by the authority of her words, to improve the morals of her subjects.

"She ruled so well over her husband's household," says Father Fodéré, "that it was more like a monastery than

[2] *Description of Poor Clare convents of the Province of St. Bonaventure*, p. 86., Lyon. 1619.

the castle of a prince. If any one, even the greatest nobleman, swore by the name of God or the Saints, Louise obliged them instantly to kneel down and kiss the ground asking the forgiveness of God or the Saints, whom they had offended, and then made them, in reparation, according to their ability or station, put an alms, into a bag which she kept in her room for the purpose, and this money she distributed to the poor. Catharine de Saulx makes mention of the charity of the princess to the sick and afflicted, and of the abundant alms which she gave to the poor, to widows, to orphans, and, above all, to lepers.

Hugh of Chalon profited so well by the example of his pious wife, that he soon surpassed all the other princes of his time in devotion, contempt of the world, as well as in goodness, mercy, and justice. The holy pair advanced with equal speed in the way of perfection. "When dancing went on in their presence," says Catharine de Saulx, "they took no heed of it but talked together of our Blessed Lord, of the joys of Heaven, and on many other holy topics." Blessed Louise used to say that balls and plays are like mushrooms, of which the best are worth nothing. "It is easier," she added, "to do without them than to make good use of them."

At the age of twenty-seven, Louise had the sorrow to lose the protector whom God had given her. After his death she refused all offers of marriage, so as to devote herself entirely to the service of God, and she practised with renewed zeal, works of penance, of piety, and of charity. As no children claimed her maternal care, Louise wished to embrace the Religious life in the Poor Clare Convent at Orbe, founded by St. Colette.[3] Before doing this, she was obliged to stay two years in the world in order to settle her worldly affairs. From her confessor, Father John Perrin, doctor of the Sorbonne and Father Guardian of the convent of the Friars of the Observance, at Nozeroy, she learnt how to say the Divine Office. Every Friday she took the dis-

[3] *Description of Poor Clare convents of the Province of St. Bonaventure.*

cipline, she spent hours in prayer, and at midnight she rose to recite Matins in her oratory, uniting her prayer with the Office which the Franciscan Friars were then saying. The long-wished-for time at length came when she could fulfil her desire, and two of her maids of honour, Catharine de Saulx and Charlotte de St. Maurice, were inspired with the same wish. In vain did her family, her subjects, and above all the poor to whom she was a true mother, seek to deter her from entering Religion, nothing could keep her back. After distributing her wealth among the poor and to the Church, she sought admittance into the Poor Clare Convent at Orbe. From henceforth to the day of her death, her life was a perfect mirror of holiness and perfection.

Her union with God was unbroken, and the tears she shed while in prayer were a token of what was passing in her soul. Even the most perfect religious marvelled at her prompt obedience. Through love of holy poverty she sought to wear the coarsest and the most worn habits. Her greatest ambition was to serve her sick sisters in all that was most painful, and in fulfilling the lowest offices in the community such as washing the dishes, helping in the kitchen, or assisting the bursar.

Blessed Louise tenderly loved the Seraphic Order, and she was full of respectful veneration for the Franciscan Fathers who held authority over the community of Orbe. "When the provincial chapter was held at Lausanne," wrote Catharine de Saulx, "a number of the Fathers called at our convent. She wished to help in washing up the dishes and she thought herself happy in serving the good Fathers by doing so. At all times she was glad when any religious came to the convent and she took care they were well attended to. Her reverence for them was so great that she used to say, 'I think that our Lord gives us much good on the days He sends these Fathers and Friars to us, and we cannot fail to gain many blessings when the sons of our holy Father, St. Francis, come to visit us."

During her life the Blessed Louise had been, in turn, the model of every age and state, she was a good daughter, wife, widow, and nun. At length the hour came when she was to receive the reward due to her holy life and many good works. The Servant of God calmly fell asleep in our Lord on the twenty-fourth of July 1503, at the age of forty-two years. She was buried in the church of the convent at Orbe, and God glorified her by many miracles. In 1555, when the nuns quitted their convent to go to Evian, the remains of Blessed Louise were transferred to the Franciscan monastery at Nozeroy and were laid in the oratory of the chapter room.[4] The devotion which had existed time out of mind to this illustrious handmaid of God was approved, in 1839, by Pope Gregory XVI. Her feast is only kept by the Franciscans of the Observance and the Conventuals.

[4] Father Fodéré, already cited, p. 89.

October 3.

Translation of St. Clare of Assisi.

[1260.]

On the eleventh day of August, in the year 1253, our glorious mother, St. Clare, was called to the eternal embraces of her Heavenly Bridegroom. Her body was buried, by the Friars Minor, in the church of St. Damian, in presence of Pope Innocent IV. and an immense crowd of people. The magistrates of the town of Assisi, deeming the little church of St. Damian was neither worthy nor safe enough to hold this precious treasure, begged that it might be removed within the city walls. The body of St. Francis had been transported, after his death, from St. Mary of the Angels in Assisi to the church of St. George, while waiting to be placed in the magnificent basilica raised in his honour. His spiritual daughter St. Clare, by the removal of her remains, received another mark of likeness to him. After the funeral ceremony, the body of the Saint borne by the Friars Minor, accompanied by the Holy Father, the clergy, and the faithful, was carried to Assisi and placed, like the body of St. Francis, in the church of St. George. The ever-increasing number of miracles wrought at the tomb of St. Clare caused Pope Alexander IV., successor to Innocent IV., to have the case inquired into, and, in 1255, he passed a solemn decree of canonization.

The inhabitants of the town of Assisi, proud of their sacred treasure, desired to raise a church in some degree worthy of their new patroness. The church of St. George

was already too small to hold the multitude of pilgrims who daily came to visit St. Clare's tomb. By order of the Sovereign Pontiff, and at his expense, Philip of Campello, a Franciscan friar and one of the most eminent architects of the age, began to build a church worthy to receive the body of the Saint. The building was finished in 1260, and the third of October, the eve of the feast of St. Francis, was the day chosen for this second translation of the body of his spiritual daughter.

In order to add to the solemnity of the occasion, the Pope convoked all the bishops of Umbria to assist thereat. The clergy assembled in the church of St. George to remove the treasure hidden there. The tomb was opened and the body of St. Clare was found incorrupt, no sign of decay being visible. Then the procession formed and proceeded to the church built in the Saint's honour, and here she was laid in a stone vault excavated at a great depth beneath the high altar. The Poor Clares then left St. Damian's to take possession of the convent which had been built for them near the new church, and there, after the lapse of six centuries, they still dwell to guard the body of their glorious Foundress. The church of St. Clare was consecrated in 1265. Clement IV., having come to visit the Saint's resting-place, charged Cardinal Rudolph to perform the ceremony of consecration, but the high altar was blessed by the Holy Father himself.

The feast of the Translation of St. Clare is kept as a Simple by the Friars Minor of the Observance, and as a Double by the Conventuals and the Capuchins.

[1] The church of St. George enclosed within the new convent is the nuns' choir at the present time.

October 4.

The Seraphic Father St. Francis. Deacon, Patriarch, and Founder of the Friars Minor, of the Poor Clares, and of the Order of Penance.

[1182—1226.]

We need not here repeat the life of the Seraphic Patriarch, it will be found at the beginning of this work. His faithful followers will take delight in reading it again with all the attention and respect which the revered memory of their Father should inspire them. We will content ourselves to-day with simply reminding them that on this festival, St. Francis is proposed to them as a model and a protector, a model to copy, a protector to invoke They should pray to their Seraphic Father with filial trust on account of the great power he now has with God. On the feast of St. Francis, as Blessed Helen Enselmini, a Poor Clare, was meditating on the virtue and merits of the holy Patriarch, she heard a heavenly voice say, "Francis was powerful on earth, but in Heaven his power is greater."

His disciples should try to imitate those virtues which have gained for him such a high degree of glory, especially his matchless humility. Our Lord said these words to St. Margaret of Cortona. "The resplendent throne which thou hast seen among the Seraphim belonged to Lucifer. Thy Blessed Father, my chosen servant Francis, is now seated thereon in great glory. The vast space which surrounds him is to be filled by those members of his Order who have imitated his virtues." The Blessed Pacificus, disciple of St Francis

and first Provincial of the Order in France, was favoured with a vision. God said to him, while showing him in Heaven a throne glittering with gold and precious gems, "This throne which thou dost admire so much, was occupied by one of the fallen Angels, now it is kept for the *humble* Francis." The next day as he was walking with his holy Father, Pacificus, mindful of his vision, asked the Saint what he thought of himself. "I think," replied Francis, "that I am the worst and last of sinners." As his companion maintained that he could not in conscience really think this, the Saint answered, "I am thoroughly convinced that if God had given the same graces to the most abandoned sinner he would have profited by them much more than I have done." Such was the teaching of St. Francis—a teaching full of humility, abnegation and sacrifice.

Franciscus pauper et humilis, cœlum dives ingreditur, hymnis cœlestibus honoratur. Alleluia. (Gradual of the Mass.)

Tuis adsta posteris, Pater Francisce, miseris: nam increscunt gemitus ovium tuarum. (Ant. *Magnificat* First Vespers.)

October 5.

Blessed John of Pinna. Priest.

[1271.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor.

Born in the little town of Pinna, in the diocese of Fermo in the March of Ancona, Blessed John was from infancy prevented by God's grace.[1] While little more than a child, when the Seraphic Order had not been long established, a beautiful youth appeared to him and told him to go to St. Stephen's church there to hearken attentively to the sermon and to follow zealously the preacher's words. "After that," the youth continued, "thou shalt make a great journey, but at last thou wilt reach Heaven, thy true home." John immediately left his father's house, and went to the church, where Brother Philip, one of the first disciples of St. Francis, was preaching the Word of God, not with words of human wisdom but full of the unction of the Holy Ghost. The sermon being ended, Blessed John went to Brother Philip, for his heart had been deeply moved during the discourse, and begged that he would receive him into the Order. Now a provincial chapter was being held at Recanati and thither was the boy sent, and was admitted to the number of the disciples of St. Francis. It was not long before the holiness of Blessed John shone as a bright light before all. His mortification, his poverty, his recol-

[1] For the life of Blessed John of Pinna, the "Flowers of St. Francis," (chap. 45.), Bartholomew of Pisa, the Menologium and the Legend of the Office, should be referred to.

lection, his love of prayer proved him to be a true son of St. Francis, thus he was thought worthy to take part in the apostolic works of the Order in remote missions.

About the year 1217, St. Francis held his first General Chapter, when he portioned out the different countries of Europe between his disciples. Blessed John Bonelli was charged, with Blessed Monaldi, Blessed Christopher, and others, to found the Order in Provence, and among his companions was Blessed John of Pinna. In the said Province, the holy Friar worked with great zeal. His unchanging sweetness, his invincible patience, and his virginal purity drew all hearts to him. He spent twenty-five years in Narbonnese Gaul, and he did much to extend the Order in those parts. Towards the year 1242, the General, Haymo of Feversham, at the request of the brothers of his own province, commanded John to return to Italy. He set out for his native country, hoping that on reaching his journey's end our Lord would call him from his earthly exile to his heavenly home. But alas! thirty years were yet to pass before the longed for day was to dawn.

On his return to his Province he was elected guardian to several communities. He filled the office with great prudence and boundless charity. God endowed him with the gift of miracles, and revealed to him the secrets of the future. He spent his days in recollection, in silence, and prayer. After saying Matins he would remain rapt in contemplation till break of day. One night, while thus absorbed in God, an angel appeared to him and told him that his life was drawing to its close, and that in order to cleanse him, God gave him the choice between one day in Purgatory or seven days of suffering in this world. Blessed John immediately chose the earthly suffering. He fell sick of a raging fever and every kind of pain and torture seemed to rack his poor body. Added to these he was afflicted with interior troubles of mind, and temptations to despair which caused him to suffer more cruelly still. After the seven days of expiation

were ended, our Lord appeared to him in great glory, and allayed his sufferings, filled his soul with joy, and told him that now the long journey which had been foretold to him was over and that eternal bliss was his portion. The face of the dying Friar was lighted up with a ray of joy, and his soul winged its flight to Heaven. This was in the year 1271. His tomb is still to be seen at Pinna, his native place. Pius VII. approved the devotion which had been his from time immemorial. His feast is kept on the fifth of October by the Friars of the Observance and the Conventuals.

October 6.

St. Mary Frances of the Wounds of Jesus. Virgin.

[1715—1791.]

Of the Third Order.

This holy maid was born at Naples, in the beginning of the last century. Her family belonged to the middle class.[1] Her father, whose name was Gallo, was a hard man, with a hot, passionate temper and from him the Saint had much to suffer. On the other hand, Barbara, her mother, was gentle, pious, faithful in the service of God, and patient in bearing with the brutal conduct of her husband.

Before the birth of this child of benediction, Barbara was troubled by visions and horrible phantoms. She sought the prayers of two great servants of God, now canonized Saints, St. John Joseph of the Cross, Barefooted Friar of the Observance, and St. Francis Jerome, of the Society of Jesus. They both reassured her and bade her take special care of

[1] The life of Mary Frances was written shortly after her death by Father Laviosa, who had known her. In 1843, on the occasion of the Beatification of the servant of God, a Canon Regular of the Lateran, published in Rome a new edition of this life, having revised and added to it. Our sketch is taken from this interesting biography.

the little one to whom she was about to give birth, for that she would one day attain to great holiness. This prediction was not long in being fulfilled. From her earliest infancy the child showed signs of what she was to be. When barely four years old, she spent hours of the day and night in prayer. It was her delight to go to church and to assist at the holy offices. Already she mortified her little body and meditated on the great mysteries of our Lord's Passion. Seeing her great desire to be enlightened on the truths of faith, God allowed her Guardian Angel to instruct her thereon. Her confessor admitted her to Holy Communion when she was only seven years old because of the knowledge she had of this holy mystery, her ardent faith, and the wonders which grace worked in her. The day was one of indescribable consolation to her. The tears she shed were an expression of the transports of joy that filled her soul. Daily Communion, which she was afterwards allowed, was the delight of her heart, and became her consolation in the long and severe trials which made up her life.

When she was sixteen, a young man, who had been struck by her piety, modesty, and other virtues, asked her in marriage. Her father, charmed by the prospect of so brilliant a match, gave his promise, without having even consulted the young maiden, never thinking that she would offer the slightest resistance. But, to his great surprise, she refused the match proposed to her with firmness, and asked his leave to consecrate herself to God in the Third Order of St. Francis. The most pressing entreaties were unavailing. Gallo then went into a violent passion and seizing a cord beat her unmercifully until her mother came and snatched it out of his hands. But the father was still furious, he locked his daughter into her room and allowed her nothing but bread and water, forbidding her mother and sisters to go near her. As for her, she was happy in having something to suffer for Jesus Christ. She bore it all in silence and offered this first pledge of faithfulness to her

Heavenly Spouse. However, a great servant of God, Father Theophilus, Friar of the Observance of St. Francis, won over her father and made him see the injustice of his behaviour, so that he acknowledged his fault and allowed his daughter to embrace the manner of life to which our Lord called her.

On the eighth of September, 1731, she took the habit of the Third Order Secular of St. Francis, in the church of the Barefooted Friars of the Observance, called Alcantarines, and she was allowed to wear the habit of penance outwardly, under the direction of these fervent religious. She was admitted by Father Felix, who became her director, and she took the name of "Sister Mary Frances of the Five Wounds of Jesus." There was a good reason for her bearing this name for she had been enamoured of these Sacred Wounds from infancy to the day of her blessed death. Every day she meditated on them as she made the Stations of the Cross, shedding many tears over them. At the second or third Station her heart would beat so violently with grief that she often fainted. On Fridays, and especially on the Fridays of Lent she felt in her body the very pains of the Passion. The first Friday of March she meditated on the mystery of the Agony, when our Lord made her feel sensibly the pains and agony He endured. The second Friday she suffered the torments of the Flagellation. On the third Friday, the Crowning with Thorns, her pain was so great that it was a miracle she did not die. The fourth Friday she participated in the mystery of the Crucifixion, her arms were stretched out, her feet placed with the right foot resting on the left, as if they were nailed, she suffered all the time from an intensely bitter taste in her mouth. The following Friday she felt the Agony and Death of our Lord. Her face became pale and livid so that she seemed dying. All the time of her sufferings a sweet odour was observed to come from her body, which was left imprinted with the Sacred Stigmata, for her consolation.

Her desire for suffering was insatiable as became a true spouse of a Crucified Lord, and it was her companion to the end. Father Gaëtan Laviosa, Provincial of the Theatines of Naples, says of Mary Frances, "I have seen and heard of her suffering, with the greatest constancy, all kinds of illnesses and pains, violent fevers, interior inflammation, gangrene of the legs, which had to be lanced and cauterised, swellings all over her and incessant pains, so that she told me once that she had endured all that could be endured." One of her confessors says, "It was beautiful to see her perfect resignation to the Will of God. She seemed never weary of suffering, she was not even incommoded by it. With her eyes fixed on heaven she offered all her pains to the Eternal Father in union with those of Jesus Christ, blessing and praising Him and ready for yet more." She imposed voluntary penances on herself, strict fasts, hair shirts and disciplines. She often took on herself the illnesses of her neighbour and particularly of her benefactors. To physical suffering was added mental pain from the persecution of her father, of her sisters and other persons jealous of her virtues. Even her confessors made her suffer by the severity of their direction to test her state. Her Divine Spouse suffered her to endure the pains of dryness and desolation, which several times reduced her to the last extremity. Thus was the servant of God tried, like gold in the crucible, for her life was one long agony.

But our Lord was mindful of His own, He came often to visit her and filled her soul with consolation. Her ecstacies became so frequent, for many years, that her life was spent in raptures. In one vision of Heaven her heart beat so violently that two of her ribs were broken. To her love of suffering was joined the deepest humility, perfect poverty and purity, which was testified to by the sweet scent observed to come from her. Her obedience was so complete that at the very hour of death she asked leave of her confessor to die. Her charity towards her neighbour and

especially towards her persecutors was perfect. To be a benefactor it was only necessary to insult her. Her compassion embraced all the afflicted, the sick and the miserable. No trouble escaped her and no trouble was too great for her to take in trying to bring relief. She often deprived herself of necessaries to give to the poor, and when she had no more to give she threw herself at the feet of the Crucifix to take a discipline, so as to move the Heart of God to obtain relief for the sufferers, which often came. Her heroic charity was often rewarded, in this life, by miracles and miraculous cures. She offered up all her sufferings for poor sinners. In 1786, our Lord appeared to her in glory and promised her, in reward for her zeal for souls, that He would grant salvation to all for whom she prayed. Her prayers and advice saved many souls from danger. Priests, religious and pious persons went to her for light and counsel. Father Peter Baptist of the Conception, ex-provincial of the Barefooted Friars, asked her advice, one day, about the direction of souls. Mary Frances told him, amongst other things, "Take care, my Father, not to let jealousies arise among your penitents, to which, we poor women, are subject. I know, by experience, how I have suffered from it. I bless God Who inspired my spiritual father to act on this principle. He desired me only to come to him in the confessional, where all his other penitents preceded me, when I went in he often only said to me roughly, 'go to Communion.' Then the devil troubled me and suggested how little pity my confessor had for me, how he ignored what I suffered at home from the complaints of my father and my sisters who were angry at my coming so late from church. For myself, without listening to these suggestions, I felt obliged to be silent. What troubled me most was the remarks of the public on my frequent visits to the confessional. I tell you this that you may be prudent and indulgent, but also that you may not spare those who need the trial."

The charity of the Saint towards the holy souls in Purga-

tory was quite heroic. She offered the greater part of her fasts and penances for their relief. She applied to them the fruit of her daily Communions and frequent Masses, and she got all the indulgences she could for them. In her ardent charity she often begged our Lord to give her their pains, and she took upon herself all the sufferings of her father and of many other people. A great number of souls owed their deliverance to her. Her confessor Father Felix, who kept a list of all those she had delivered, exclaimed one day, "How is it, that any souls remain still in Purgatory!" God allowed some souls to appear to her to ask for her prayers. One applied to her begging for the indulgences of the Stations of the Cross, adding seven Hail Maries in honour of our Lady under the title of the "Holy Shepherdess," because she had already been relieved by this invocation. Two others begged for the indulgence of the Portiuncula. She was always pleading for them with others and especially with priests, to do their utmost for these patient sufferers.

Like her Seraphic Father, Mary Frances had a tender devotion to the Infant Jesus. Not content with making a Novena in preparation for the Feast of Christmas, she began, from the first Sunday of Advent, a series of fasts, vigils and penances in preparation for the signal favours she always received, in ecstacies, visions and raptures. In 1741, as she was kneeling at the Crib, she saw our Lord in glory. He gave her His right hand, saying "This night you shall be My spouse." The light was so bright that she lost her eye-sight. The next day she had to be led by a companion to Father Felix, her confessor, who restored her sight by the command of obedience. This was how Mary Frances became the spouse of her Divine Master.

Her love of the Holy Eucharist was like a consuming fire. Sometimes, to prove her, her directors forbid her going to Holy Communion, which was a real agony to her. She complained of it to our Lord when He appeared to her,

Who answered, that in obeying her spiritual father she became more dear to Him. When she heard Mass the time seemed to her far too long, so great was her desire for Communion. Our Lord was pleased sometimes to hasten the moment miraculously. One day she begged her confessor to say a Mass for the dead, as it was shorter, but as the office of the day did not allow of it, she said, "Hasten your Mass, of your charity, it is too long, it never ends," Her confessor said it as quickly as he could, but at the moment of saying *Ecce Agnus Dei*, before giving her Communion, the Sacred Host which he held in his fingers, disappeared, he looked for It with anxiety, fearing It had fallen, when the Saint made a sign to him that she had received It. On another occasion, when she wished to go to Communion and had to wait, on account of the crowd, a Host flew from the ciborium and rested on her tongue. The venerable Bianchi relates a yet more miraculous circumstance, witnessed by many. He says, "Her love of the Blessed Sacrament was so heroic and burning, that God often deigned to console her by the ministry of Angels. During my Masses God permitted her to participate in the Precious Blood which was in the Chalice. In truth, the Archangel St. Raphael, after the consecration and my Communion, took the chalice from the altar and carried it to the house of the servant of God, detained there by illness, and communicated her. Sometimes she drank very little, hardly three drops, another time she drank about half. I was well aware of the disappearance of part of the Precious Blood. When I questioned her myself on what had happened, she replied, "My father, if the Archangel St. Raphael had not warned me that the Sacrifice was not complete, I should have drunk the whole." Another time she received by the ministry of Angels the small portion of the consecrated Host that is put into the chalice according to the rubric. Her love for our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament won for her many great favours. Our Lord appeared to her in the Sacred

Host under the form of a little Child, then in glory. His faithful servant honoured Him and offered up reparation for all the insults and profanations He endured in this mystery of love.

She had a tender love for the Blessed Virgin, under her patronage she placed all her wants. She tried to propagate the love of Mary amongst all her acquaintances. She honoured her under all her titles, but was especially attracted to invoke her as the "Divine Shepherdess," or the Mother of the Divine Shepherd. Mary Frances was often favoured by the visible help of her Guardian Angel and St. Raphael, towards whom she was most devout. SS. Peter and Paul, St. Joseph, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Peter of Alcantara, St. Paschal Baylon, St. Nicholas of Bari and St. Januarius were her special protectors.

Among her gifts, God gave her the power of reading the future. He revealed to her all the calamities by which the Church and the world were menaced at that time. Pius VI. after his election was shewn to her in a vision, with his head crowned with thorns. The flight of Louis XVI. took place on the night of June twenty-first, 1791. As soon as the news was known in Naples, every one rejoiced, but the Saint knew that he had been arrested at Varennes and had been taken back to Paris. She said to several priests, "I can see nothing but misfortunes, troubles in the present, greater troubles in the future, and I pray God I may not witness them. A great plague will appear in the world, our Lord is angry, pray that His anger may be appeased. My father let us pray without ceasing." She redoubled her prayers and her penances for the Sovereign Pontiff and for the Church. But the sight of the sufferings prepared for the Church killed her. She could bear it no longer, she prayed to die and God heard her prayer. It was on the sixth of October, 1791, that this holy soul went to her God.

St. Mary Frances was buried in the church of St. Lucy of the Mount, which contained the tomb of St. John Joseph

of the Cross. She was declared Venerable, by Pius VII. in 1803. Beatified by Gregory XVI. in 1843, and canonized by Pius IX. in 1867, with St. Leonard of Port Maurice.

(Her feast is kept on this day by the Friars of the Observance and the Capuchins as a Double of the second Class, and by the Conventuals as a Greater Double.)

October 8.

St. Bridget of Sweden. Widow.

[1302—1373.]

Of the Third Order.

St. Bridget was born about the year 1302, in the kingdom of Sweden, which was unfortunately snatched from the Catholic Faith in the sixteenth century. Her father, Birger, was a member of the royal house of Sweden, and Sigridis, her mother, was descended from the kings of the Goths. To their illustrious descent, her parents united a lively faith, the exalted practice of Christian virtues, and especially a singular devotion to the sufferings of our Lord. Shortly after her birth, Bridget lost her holy mother. Brought up by her father and chiefly by an aunt who was also devoted to a life of perfection, the child, as soon as she knew of God, praised and loved Him. She gave Him her heart and tried to keep it untarnished from the least breath of the world.

The Holy Ghost instilled into this young soul the abundance of heavenly gifts, He illuminated her mind and enkindled in her heart the fire of His love. At ten years of age she was present at a sermon preached on the Passion of our Lord, the following night she saw Him hanging on the cross, covered with bruises and gaping wounds, the blood streaming over His Body and His Head encircled

with His thorny crown. "Oh, Lord," she cried, "who has treated You in this way?" "They who hold Me in contempt," replied the Crucified, "and who despise My love." The vision vanished leaving Bridged plunged in a sea of sorrow and of love. From that hour the Sacred Passion became the subject of her habitual meditation, she was thoroughly imbued with the thought of the unspeakable torments which our Lord endured on Calvary and as she pondered on them she shed torrents of tears.

This love for her Redeemer drew her to consecrate her virginity to Him but obedience prevented her from carrying out this holy wish. When she was barely sixteen, her father gave her as a bride to Ulpho, prince of Nericia, a young man of solid virtue and worthy in every way of being wedded to so holy a wife. In order to strengthen themselves in piety and in the practice of penance, they joined the Third Order of St. Francis and by mutual consent they spent the first year of their marriage in continence. Later on God blessed a union so conformable to His law, and St. Bridget became the mother of eight children, four sons and four daughters. One of them, named Catharine, walked in the footsteps of her holy mother and is honoured among the saints of God. Bridget considered it her first duty to mould her children, from their infancy, to God's service, and in order that they might see nothing evil at home, she would only take into her service persons of tried virtue. She herself set them an example of working diligently, of perfect observance to the Divine law, of tender charity towards the poor, and of fervent piety. Her good husband, Ulpho, followed her in the way of holiness, sharing her devotion and willingly cooperating in her deeds of charity.

After being for some time superintendent of the household of the Queen of Sweden, Ulpho resigned his office and made, with Bridget and his children, long pilgrimages to the most famous shrines in Norway, Germany, Italy, Spain, and France. On their return home, Ulpho entered the Cis-

tercian monastery at Alvastre and here he died in the odour of sanctity in the year 1344. At his death, Bridget divided her goods among her children and the poor, then clothing herself in coarse garments with a cord for a girdle, she began to lead a life of incredible austerity. At Wastein, in Sweden, she built a convent for nuns to whom she prescribed the Rule of St. Augustine and she appointed priests and lay brothers for the service of the convent, thus was founded the Order of our Saviour. Bridget spent two more years in Sweden dwelling either at Wastein or at Alvastre where Ulpho had died. This change in her mode of life, her poverty, and her austerities drew upon her a storm of abuse. The world laughed at her, and her holy practices were all turned into ridicule, but the Saint calmly replied to those who made derisive remarks, "You have nothing to do with my choice and for your sakes I shall not alter anything in my manner of life."

From her childhood this servant of God had been favoured with heavenly visions but it was only after the death of her husband that her wonderful revelations began, in which our Lord was pleased to make known to her His secrets. At first she was affrighted, dreading to be deluded by the spirit of lies, but God told her to go to a certain Canon Matthias, a wise, enlightened man, one remarkably expert in the guidance of souls. Before her death Peter, a Cistercian monk and Prior of the monastery of Alvastre, was her director and companion in her pilgrimages, and to him she likewise revealed her blessed visions. They were troublous days when Bridget received her wonderful revelations from Heaven. The bark of Peter was more than ever tossed on the stormy waters, and to Rome and Italy, torn by the old factions of Guelph and Ghibelline, the absence of the Papacy, which had taken up its residence at Avignon, was a chief and increasing cause of suffering. Disorder reigned everywhere. By Divine light, Bridget knew and understood the depth of the wounds inflicted on the Spouse of Christ,

and she spoke of them as did the Prophets of old of the sorrows of Israel and of Juda. She complained to the different ecclesiastical bodies, she found fault with and rebuked with just severity all that was blame-worthy, without troubling herself as to the rank or dignity of persons. Jesus unveiled to her, not for herself but for the sake of souls, the sorrows of His Church, so that she could not keep silence on the grief with which her Divine Lord was filled.

Two years after the death of Ulpho, St. Bridget received an order from our Lord to repair to Rome. Here she dwelt for years, giving herself up to the practice of the most sublime virtue. Her revelations were frequent, their object being often the disorders of the Roman people, and she did not shrink from making known the punishments with which God was threatening them. She exhorted them to enter into themselves and to endeavour to avert the wrath of God by penance and sincere conversion. More than once the ardour of her zeal drew upon her insult, calumny, and persecution, but nothing could disturb or alter her peace, for God was her light and her strength.

On the fourth of October, in the year 1354, as the Saint was praying in the church of St. Francis *a Ripa*, the Seraphic Father appeared to her and told her to make a pilgrimage to Assisi. During her stay in that town, our Lord, in a vision, made known to her the authenticity of the Portiuncula Indulgence which to some was a matter of doubt. On the day of her departure from Assisi as she prayed in the church of the Portiuncula, she beheld the holy Patriarch bearing the marks of the Five Sacred Wounds. This vision begot in her heart a greater yearning for God's glory and the salvation of souls.

In 1371, our Lord commanded His handmaid to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and here He loaded her with His most precious graces by imparting to her a knowledge of His sacred mysteries. Being returned to Italy she

warned the Neapolitans to repress certain disorders which were a great offence to God. She went back to Rome already stricken with her death sickness. Like St. Catharine of Siena, and Peter of Aragon, the Franciscan, a nephew of St. Louis of Anjou, St. Bridget was raised up by God to work for the return of the Papacy to Rome, for this end she was charged to deliver several messages to the Popes Innocent VI., Urban V., and Gregory XI. This great servant of God died in Rome, on the twenty-seventh of July, 1373, at the age of seventy-one years. She was buried in the Poor Clare convent of St. Lawrence *in Panisperna*. The following year, her body was transferred to the convent at Wastein, in Sweden.

St. Bridget was canonized by Pope Boniface IX. Her feast is kept on this day throughout the Church.

October 10.

Blessed Robert Malatesta, Prince of Rimini.

1411—1432.

Of the Third Order.

This Servant of God was born at Brescia, his father Pandolfo, lord of Rimini, being governor of the town. From childhood prayer was his delight, and he chastised his innocent body by fasts, disciplines, and the wearing of haircloth. As he grew in age, his heart was set on fire with the love of God, part of the night he spent in contemplation. Often his room was lit up with heavenly light when he was being favoured with sweet converse with our Blessed Lord. St. Francis, whom he had taken for his patron, also appeared to him and one day, in a vision, the Saint showed to his client the marks of the Sacred Stigmata. On the death of his father, Charles

Malatesta, his uncle, who had no children, adopted Robert as his son and made him his heir. In obedience to the wishes of his uncle, the young prince, at the age of eighteen, married Margaret d' Este, the daughter of the Marquis of Ferrara. This holy princess had been brought up in her father's court with Catharine of Vigri afterwards known as St. Catharine of Bologna. The young couple lived in very holy and chaste union.

In the year following, Robert lost his uncle and he joined the estates which he inherited from him to the principality of Rimini; he was then nineteen years old. Being now more independent, Robert was able to devote himself with greater freedom to works of charity. Following the advice of St. Francis, he took the habit of Penance from the hands of his confessor, who was a Friar Minor, and faithfully kept the Tertiary Rule. He was a father to the poor, and bestowed on them abundant alms, he lodged them in his palace and waited on them himself, honouring in them the person of his Divine Saviour.

So pure and devout a soul was soon ripe for Heaven. Blessed Robert was barely twenty-two when God called him to his rest, his death happened on the tenth of October in the year 1432. He was buried, according to his desire, clad in the Franciscan habit, in the cemetery of the Friars Minor. Many were the miracles wrought at his tomb, and although no feast is kept in his honour, he has from time out of mind been called Blessed. He has always been held in veneration and the faithful have received manifold graces through his intercession.

After the death of Blessed Robert, his widow, the pious Margaret d' Este, who had borne him no children, returned to the Court of her father, resolving to consecrate to God the remainder of her days. But Nicholas d' Este willed that his daughter should make a second marriage. Deeply grieved at this, Margaret had recourse to her friend, St Catharine of Bologna, then a nun in the convent at Ferrara. Catharine

encouraged the princess in her holy resolution, bade her have trust in God and promised to aid her by prayer. The eve of the day, however, came, on which Margaret was to leave Ferrara to join the sovereign whom she was about to wed. During the night, her husband, Blessed Robert, appeared to her and contracted with her a new and spiritual union. "Know, Margaret," said he, "that I am your husband, and I will not suffer you to have any other. You were my bride according to the flesh, henceforth you shall be my spiritual spouse." Blessed Robert then told her that, thanks to the prayers of St Catharine of Bologna, the proposed marriage would not take place. The following morning, a messenger came to tell Nicholas d' Este that the prince, betrothed to his daughter, had died suddenly. From that time Margaret was free to dedicate to God the days of her widowhood.[2]

October 12.

St. Seraphino of Montegranaro, Lay brother.

[1540—1604.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchins.

Born of a family poor in earthly goods and obscure in the sight of men, Seraphino reached, in a humble, hidden life, to a sublime degree of perfection. From his infancy his pious mother brought him up in the practice of solid virtue and he soon showed a great love of prayer. He went regularly to church and did not join in any childish sports. While yet very young he was confided to the care of a countryman and was employed by him as a shepherd boy. This occupation far from lessening his fervour, helped daily to increase it. Alone and in solitude nothing came to repress

[2] Manuscript chronicles of the Poor Clares, by Mariano of Florence, P. II., of the life of St. Catharine of Bologna.

the transports of his heart. He carved a cross on an oak tree, and, kneeling before it, he spent many hours in prayer, he called upon God with all the ardour of his soul, implored His mercy, and begged his love, and there was need of it, for the hour of trial was drawing near. Left an orphan by the death of his parents, the youthful shepherd was taken away from his employment by his eldest brother, who was a bricklayer and of a harsh and violent temper, and in his service the boy had much to suffer. But neither brutal words nor cruel treatment could alter his patience or make him turn from his resolution of leading a holy and innocent life.[1]

From early childhood, this servant of God was especially devout to our Lady. It happened once as he was on his way to visit her shrine at Loreto that the river Potenza had overflowed its banks; no one dared to cross; the Saint, however, calmly went on his road without troubling himself as to the danger, and he crossed the river with dry feet and his garments not even wetted by the water.[2] At the age of sixteen, God inspired him to join the Capuchin Order, so as to shelter himself from the dangers of the world and to consecrate his life to the service of God. Simple lay brother as he was, he soon rivalled the most fervent among the religious in humility, charity, mortification, and obedience, his whole life proclaiming him to be a true disciple of St. Francis. Seraphino had a special attraction for meditation on the mystery of the Blessed Eucharist. Every night when the brethren had retired to rest, he went to the church and spent three hours in prayer before the Tabernacle; then, after a short sleep, he assisted at Matins and continued in contemplation till break of day. God was pleased to reward him with visions and ecstacies. He never forsook his habit of prayer either in his travels, at his work, or in his dealings with men. Like the blessed in Heaven, he found in God's presence, light, food, rest and joy; all else was as nothing to him.

[1] *Decree of Canonization.* [2] *Ibid.*

The evil spirits sought to disturb this continual prayer, and threats, temptations and bad treatment, were showered on the Saint by these rebellious spirits, but nothing could trouble or vanquish his constancy. Often in the hour of trial, the Blessed Virgin, whom he loved and revered as a mother, came to console him, and to strengthen and prepare him for fresh attacks. She would fill the Saint with such gladness in these happy visions, that it was as a foretaste to him of the heavenly joy which the presence of Mary sheds on the blessed in Heaven. Holy poverty was as dear to him as it had been to his Seraphic Father. The cell which he occupied was dark, narrow, and inconvenient, his garments were threadbare, his food usually consisted of bread and water, and, in order to make it more insipid, he spread ashes on his bread. His fasts were frequent and he eat so little, at all times, that men marvelled how he was able to go through the usual exercises of religious life.

Seraphino looked upon himself as the last and least of men, his ambition was to be the servant of all. Pain, humiliation and contempt, awoke in him feelings of joy and gratitude, he would often seek them. He would kiss the hands and feet of those who injured him and he considered them to be his real benefactors. The love of God which overflowed his heart inspired him with tender charity towards his neighbour, he was kind and courteous to all, ever ready to serve others. But most of all he loved the poor, he did everything in his power to relieve them and for their sake he sometimes deprived himself of the needful. In time of famine he contented himself with four ounces of bread a day so that there might be more to give to those who were starving. While filling the office of porter and being charged to succour the poor at the convent gate, his zeal appeared to overstep the rules of prudence, sometimes he would even give away all the vegetables which were growing in the garden. His Superior upbraided him for his too great liberality. "Do not be uneasy," replied the Saint, "we shall

always have vegetables in abundance, and the community will have nothing to suffer from its alms." And so it was, for the vegetables which he had cut in the evening sprang up again during the night and the share given to the poor in no way lessened the crop.[3] It was thus that God praised Seraphino's charity in the sight of his brethren. The servant of God was not less zealous for the spiritual needs of his neighbour, and his exhortations brought many sinners to repentance whose hearts great preachers had been unable to touch. He would have liked to go among the infidels to make known to them Jesus Christ and to lay down his life for the love of God, but his Superiors did not accede to his desires.[4] God was content with the daily and hourly sacrifice which Seraphino offered to him in the cloister.

St. Seraphino was endowed with the gift of reading the secrets of hearts and with that of prophecy. He was more enlightened from above on the truths of faith and in the spiritual life than he could have been by all the teaching of masters and of books. Thus his advice was often sought after and it was a fruitful source of virtue to souls. He had also received in a high degree the gift of miracles. By making the sign of the Cross, he restored to health an innumerable number of sick people. The concourse was so great that the solitude of the religious was thereby disturbed, and his superiors were on the point of forbidding him to work miracles. God was thus pleased to glorify this humble brother, a man of no account before the world but great in the sight of His Divine Majesty.

St. Seraphino fell asleep in the Lord at the convent of Ascoli, in the March of Ancona, where he dwelt, on the twelfth of October, 1604, at the age of sixty-four years. His tomb is preserved in the convent of Ascoli where many miracles have proved his power with God. Clement XIII. inscribed his name among those of the Saints, in the year 1767. His feast is kept to-day by the Friars of the

[3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.*

Observance as a Double, by the Conventuals as a Greater Double, and by the Capuchins as a Double of the Second Class.

October 13.

Saint Daniel and his Companions, Martyrs.

[1227.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor.

THE triumph of the glorious apostles of Morocco, who had first hallowed the work of the Seraphic Francis, by the palm of martyrdom, excited a noble and generous emulation in the order of Friars Minor. Daniel, the Provincial of Calabria, a man of eminent sanctity, desired Brother Elias then Vicar General, to go himself with six companions, Angelo, Samuel, Donulus, Leo, Ugolino and Nicholas[1] to preach the Faith in the Empire of Morocco.

In the year 1227, these holy missionaries embarked from a Tuscan port to cross to Spain, from whence they directed their course towards the African shores. Their first design had been, to mingle their blood with that of their brethren who had been martyred in 1219. But many reasons favourable to their pious enterprise, made them determine to proceed first to Ceuta, one of the principal towns of the Empire. As Christians were strictly forbidden to enter the town, they took up their abode for several days in one of the suburbs, where Christian merchants from Pisa, Genoa and Marseilles resided. On Friday, the first day of October, they consulted together as to the means to take, in order to penetrate into Ceuta, and there devote themselves to the preaching of the Gospel. The next day, Saturday, they made their confessions to

[1] The chronicle of the twenty-four Generals and other annalists of the Order, give us the acts of these holy martyrs.

one another, received Holy Communion, and in the evening of the same day, in imitation of our Lord, they washed each other's feet. The following night was spent in prayer, to recommend to God what they had undertaken for His glory, and early on Sunday morning the courageous champions entered the town, and began to preach the Faith of Jesus Christ in the streets and public places.

This made a great uproar in Ceuta. The heathens began by insulting them, then having laid hands on the missionaries, ill-treated them, and led them before the governor of the town. In his presence, and before the great ones of the court, the missionaries spoke with still greater courage of the holy truths of the Faith. The governor, thinking they were mad, ordered them to be put in irons and thrown into prison. There they remained for eight days, exposed to all kinds of outrages from the Moors.

During their imprisonment, they wrote a letter to the Christians of the suburb, in which the joy they felt in being able to offer their lives for Jesus Christ was shown. "Blessed be God, the Father of mercies, Who comforteth us in all our tribulation! . . . ." said they. "Our Lord has commanded us —'Go—preach the Gospel'. . . . 'The servant is not greater than his master.'—'If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.' We then, poor and unworthy servants of Jesus Christ, struck by these words, have abandoned our country, and come to preach to these countries for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, for the edification of the faithful, and the confusion of obstinate infidels. For this we have entered this town, and have preached before the king himself the Name of Jesus. We have declared to him that there is no other Name under Heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved, proving this to him by irrefutable reasons in the presence of his learned men. But he has treated us as madmen, and thrown us into prison, and although we may have much to suffer, we are nevertheless greatly comforted in our Lord, hoping He will be pleased to

accept the sacrifice of our lives. To Him only, be honour and glory for evermore." On Sunday, the tenth of October, the governor, or king as he is called in this letter of the martyrs, had them brought before him again, and attempted to induce them to renounce their Faith. But far from allowing themselves to be overcome, these confessors of Jesus Christ proclaimed boldly the truth of the Christian Faith, and the falsity of the law of Mahomet. The king ordered them to be separated in the hope of conquering them with greater ease. Then he tried to tempt each alone by promises, or by threats. It was useless trouble, the servants of God never for one instant retracted. Sentence of death was at last pronounced against these generous confessors, they were condemned to be beheaded. Never had sweeter words sounded in their ears.

When again within their prison walls, the six Friars threw themselves at the feet of St. Daniel, their superior, and begging his blessing, thanked him for having brought them to the crown of martyrdom. Daniel with tears embraced these heroes of Jesus Christ, and then blessing them, invited them to the Feast of the Father of the family. "Let us rejoice in the Lord, my faithful companions, behold, this is a Festival for us! The holy Angels come forth to meet us and conduct our souls to the eternal tabernacles. To-day, the white-robed army of martyrs will receive us amongst them. The Heavens open already above our heads, we shall soon be in possession of eternal happiness."

The glorious martyrdom of these generous sons of the Seraphic Francis, took place on the tenth of October. They were stripped of their garments, and their hands being fastened behind them, they were led to the place of execution. They advanced joyously as to a festival, and never ceased singing the praises of God. When come to the scene of their martyrdom, they fell on their knees, and presented their heads to the sword of the executioner, and their souls took flight to the throne of God to receive the crown

reserved for martyrdom. The crowd threw themselves on the bodies and tore them to pieces, however the Christians succeeded in rescuing the remains from the hands of the infidels, and gave them burial. A Portuguese prince having obtained these holy relics from the Emperor of Morocco, had them brought to Spain. Striking miracles attested to the glory which these holy martyrs enjoyed in Heaven. In 1516 Leo X. placed them on the altars. (Their feast is kept on this day throughout the Order.)

October 19.

St. Peter of Alcantara, Priest.

[1499—1562.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

The sixteenth century was a glorious epoch for the Church in Spain. Cardinal Ximenes, a Friar Minor of the Observance, had, during the reign and regency of Isabella the Catholic, revived the religious spirit of the Spanish people, he united their forces, spread their conquests, and made the way for that formidable power which was to be used by Charles V. and Philip II, as a weapon to arrest the progress of Protestantism.

Shortly after the death of this illustrious Friar Minor, there appeared, in the midst of this Catholic nation, a galaxy of venerable persons who shed upon the Church a matchless lustre. St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus, St. Francis Xavier, and St. Francis Borgia. St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross, Reformers of the Carmelites, St. John of God, founder of the Order of Charity, St. Thomas of Villanova, of the Order of St. Augustine, St. Lewis Bertrand, of the Order of St. Dominic, and the Venerable John of Avila. In the Franciscan Order, St.

Peter Baptist, St. Paschal Baylon, St. Francis Solano, BB. Salvador of Orta, Nicholas Factor, Andrew Hibernon, Julian of St. Augustine. Among these illustrious sons of the Observance in Spain, St. Peter of Alcantara appears in the first rank, we are now about to relate at length his memorable virtues. St. Peter was to be one of the most powerful pillars of the Church and one of the most illustrious Saints of the Seraphic Order.[1]

This great servant of God was born in the year 1499, at Alcantara, a town in Estramadura, near the frontier of Portugal. His father, Peter Garavito was a gentleman of high character, a distinguished lawyer, and the governor of the town of Alcantara. The mother of our Saint, Maria Villela de Sanabria, was also of high Spanish descent, nor was she beneath her husband in rare qualities or solid virtues.

Brought up by his pious parents, Peter early imbibed those sentiments of heavenly things which, in his case, grew apace with the growth of his reason. At six years old, he already led an interior life, and loved to pray in the oratory in his father's house. He was remarkable for his sweet and

[1] The principal biographers of the life of St. Peter of Alcantara are Father John of St. Mary, chronicler of the Province of St. Joseph, and Father Francis Marchese, of the Oratory. The first, who was almost a contemporary of the Saint, published his life in the chronicle of the Province of St. Joseph. (P. I., Book I. C. XII.—XXXI.) Father Marchese wrote a much longer life in Italian, from the acts of the process of canonization; it is, say the Bollandists, *accuratissima et completissima;* an edition appeared at Rome in 1667; a second at Venice in 1671; a third at Florence in 1708; Father Marchese's life of the Saint was translated into French and published at Lyons in 1770. Father Lawrence of St. Paul, a Portuguese friar of the Observance, wrote a life, in Latin, which was published at Rome in 1669, it is only, so to speak, a reproduction of Father Marchese's work. The Bollandists give the life written by Father John of St. Mary, and that of Father Lawrence. The writer who continued Wadding has generally followed the latter. (Ann. Min. Vol. XIX.) Countless writers have written either *ex professo*, or incidentally of St. Peter of Alcantara. We have followed Father Marchese and Father John of St. Mary.

amiable disposition, and for a discretion beyond his years. However much he might be crossed, he was never irritable nor passed the bounds of moderation. His parents sent him to study grammar and philosophy, in which he made such rapid progress that he soon surpassed his fellow students. He would not join in the amusements common to his age but sought retirement so as to give himself up to prayer or study. He took pleasure in the conversation of serious and grave men, and, above all, of religious from whom he could learn something of the secrets of the spiritual life. His piety and virtue were so great that he went by the name of "the holy child." Once one of his father's servants found him in the church, near the organ, rapt in ecstacy and so wholly absorbed in God that it was impossible to recall him to outward things. This early sign of holiness was a great cause of joy to his pious parents, and his father gave orders that for the future no one should interrupt the boy while he was at prayer, especially when he was seen to be in an ecstacy.

When he was twelve years old, Peter had the misfortune to lose his father. After being for some time a widow, his mother, yielding to the advice of prudent persons and of members of her family, took for her second husband, Don Alfonso Barrantes, a gentleman of Alcantara, to whom she bore two children. His stepfather appreciated the good qualities of Peter, he loved him, watched over his education, and resolved to send him to the celebrated university of Salamanca, there to pursue his studies. Peter was, at the time, fourteen years of age. While at Salamanca, he divided his time between study, exercises of devotion, charity, and penance. He made wonderful progress in his university studies as well as in the Science of the Saints. In his fervent prayer, God inspired him with a very strong feeling of the instability of earthly things, and with a desire to embrace the religious life. These first impressions were almost immediately followed by contrary aspirations, but

the young servant of God used prayer as a weapon against the suggestions of the Spirit of darkness, and after some days of doubt and struggle, he made his choice between God and the world.

In the year 1515, Peter Garavito, then only sixteen, took the poor Franciscan habit, in the convent of Manjarez, among the Barefooted Friars of the Custody of the Holy Gospel. God willed by a miracle to show how pleasing to Him was the Saint's withdrawal from the world. As Peter hastened to this holy abode, he was stopped by the swollen waters of the river Titar. The youthful servant of God had recourse to prayer and he then found himself miraculously transported to the opposite shore. The convent of Manjarez, where our saint was received to make his noviceship, was situated in a solitary spot on the slope of the mountains which separate Castile and Portugal. The spirit of the world was strictly banished from this holy dwelling, everything breathed of the cross, of penance and of poverty. Here the secret aspirations of the young novice were gratified. This was the field in which he was about to wage that war against nature which ends only with life. During his noviceship, he exercised himself in the practice of all virtues, chiefly in unceasing prayer and rigorous austerity. He treated his body with the most terrible severity. His senses were so subdued and kept under, that outward things were hardly perceived by him. Such was his habitual recollection, that after being a year in the convent he could not tell if the church in which he daily prayed was vaulted or not. While employed in serving in the refectory, he let some fruit spoil which was hanging on the beams of the pantry, and then declared with simplicity that he had never even seen it.

After dwelling for some years in the convent at Manjarez, our Saint was sent to Belviso. Here he redoubled his austerities, spending almost the whole of the night in contemplation and penance. In 1517, the Custody of the Holy Gospel having been incorporated with the Observance

and, in 1519, constituded a Province by Blessed Gabriel Mary, under the title of St. Gabriel, the Superiors of the Order thought of founding a convent at Badajos. Father Angelo of Valladolid, Minister of the Province, chose the Friars who were to make the new foundation, and Peter Alcantara, though not yet ordained priest, was appointed Superior. The Servant of God had scarcely been six years in Religion and albeit superior and youngest among the brethren he showed himself to be the most humble and the most active. He was to be seen digging, carrying material for the building, and encouraging the workmen employed in the construction of the convent. He took great care that this house should be conformable to the strictest poverty, he would accept alms only in proportion to the day's need and he avoided every superfluity. In his office of superior, he guided the Religious with consumate wisdom, never imposing on them any obligation which he was not the first to observe. In his reprimands he displayed great mildness, and he never spoke to his brethren without respect. Fashioned according to his holy instructions and by the example of his life and penance, the Friars of this house rapidly advanced in perfection and later on rendered good service to the Church and to souls.

In 1524, St. Peter of Alcantara, being then in his twenty-fifth year, was raised to the priesthood and shortly after he received letters patent as a preacher. From this time, we shall find his life was wholly employed in the evangelic ministry or in the government of his brethren. But before speaking of his works, we must say a few words on the virtues for which he was most conspicuous.

Penance may be said to have been the characteristic virtue of St. Peter of Alcantara. He looked upon his body as an enemy which he ruled with a rod of iron and with which he never could come to terms. Ceaselessly occupied with the Passion of Christ, there was no sort of suffering which

he did not invent so as to associate himself with the expiation of our Lord on Calvary. For twenty years he wore an iron belt round his loins, the points of which tore his flesh. During the space of forty-six years he took the discipline twice every night, once after Matins and again at break of day. These scourgings were so terrible that the floor and the walls of his cell were covered with blood. In the depth of winter, he left his door and window open for a great part of the night. At other times, he went into the garden and got into a frozen pond where he remained for two or three hours. His watchings were continual. His food consisted of a small quantity of black bread, to which, on feast days, he added a few herbs. He never tasted wine, not even in sickness. This constant abstinence ended by deadening in him all sense of taste so that he could not tell if food were hot or cold, sweet or bitter, seasoned or not. St. Teresa, in the twenty-seventh chapter of her life, speaks of the mortifications of this great servant of God. "For forty years," she says, "he never slept, day or night, for more than an hour and a half. Of all his mortifications that which cost him most in the beginning was to conquer sleep. The rest he yielded to nature, he took sitting down with his head leaning against a piece of wood fastened in the wall. He never covered his head with his hood, whether in the heat of the sun, or in the rain, went barefoot, wore only a habit of coarse sackcloth next his skin, and over it a scanty mantle of the same stuff. It was usual with him to eat but once in three days. One of his companions told me that he sometimes passed a week without taking food, this was probably in his great raptures caused by transports of Divine Love. He told me that in his youth he had spent three years in a house of the Order without knowing any of the brethren except by the sound of their voices, for he never raised his eyes. Peter of Alcantara was already old when I had the happiness of knowing him. His body was so wasted that it seemed formed of the roots of trees."

Severe as he was to himself, the Saint was gentle and full of pity towards others. Once, as he was begging St. Teresa to moderate her austerities, she said to him, "Father, why are you so indulgent towards me and, on the contrary, so strict with yourself?" Peter humbly replied, "There is no merit, Mother, in my way of living, it is a matter of habit with me." In his old age, when he was advised to lessen his mortifications, he refused, saying, "Between my body and myself there is a compact. My body has promised to let itself be illtreated on earth and I have promised to let it rest in Heaven." Immediately after death he appeared to St. Teresa and said, "O blessed penance which has gained for me so much glory." Of all the Saints of the Seraphic Order, St. Peter of Alcantara is perhaps the one who carried furthest the rigours of penance. Thus crucified in body, he was not less so in soul. The life of this great servant of God was nothing but a tissue of afflictions and trials of every kind. No complaint ever passed his lips, though he was calumniated, persecuted, illtreated, all he said was that he only got his deserts. His patience passed into a proverb, and the Spaniards used to say, "To bear such an insult one must have the patience of St. Peter of Alcantara.

This true disciple of St. Francis was a great lover of holy poverty. He wished that this virtue should shed its lustre on all the houses of the Order. In the convents founded by him the cells resembled graves, the doors were so low that it was necessary to stoop on entering. He wished poverty to be as real as it was apparent and that nature should suffer from it. It was his joy to be in want of the needful for then he looked upon himself as truly poor. A Dominican father saw him one day in the garden with bare arms and appeared shocked, the Saint, pointing to his tunic which was drying on a tree, said, "Father, if there is any fault in this, the Gospel is to blame, for it only allows us to have one garment." He never wore any but an old, patched habit, and if he changed, it was to take one which he thought was

more worn and poorer. In his advice to St. Teresa, on the Reform of Carmel, he ever insisted on the practice of absolute poverty and of total abandonment to the Providence of God.

The holiness of Peter of Alcantara was based on lowliness of heart and the mean opinion he had of himself. "I am an unprofitable servant," he would often say, "and of no use in the house of God. What hast thou, O my soul, which comes not from God? What shall I render to the Lord for so many graces? I give thee, O my God, the little that I have and that I can offer Thee." While Provincial and later Commissary General, he often knelt in the refectory to confess his faults, kissed the feet of the Friars, fulfilled the lowest and most laborious offices in the community, such as sweeping, washing the dishes, working in the garden, cutting wood in the neighbouring forest and carrying it on his shoulders to the convent. He looked upon himself in very truth as the servant of all his brethren.

When travelling, Peter took care to enter the towns at night so as to avoid the people who would throng round him. When bishops, nobles, and even kings welcomed him with every mark of respect, he would say to himself, "Art thou not dead to the world? Be then like a corpse unmoved in the midst of honour and praise." Princess Jane of Austria, daughter of Charles V., wished him to become her director, but the man of God, preferring obscurity to greatness, refused to accept the charge and he begged the Infanta to excuse him. The emperor, Charles V., desired to take him for his confessor and sent for the Saint to come to him. Peter excused himself telling the emperor that there were men in his kingdom much more fitted than he was to undertake the care of his soul. Charles insisted, the Saint begged the monarch to give him time to lay his request before God in prayer. "Your majesty," he said, "surely only desires in this matter the fulfilment of the Will of God. If I do not come back, your majesty must consider that it is not

according to His Will that I should yield to this request." The humble servant of God returned to his convent at Pedroso and in prayer received light from God. He asked himself if he had entered Religion to seek honours or to fly from them, and if he had not come to live hidden in solitude and to lead a life of penance. When he did not return the emperor was not offended but, on the contrary, conceived a higher opinion of the holiness of the Saint.

To true humility of heart, the Saint joined great meekness in his dealings with others. He was most indulgent in his judgments, always attributing good intentions to all, even to those who were opposed to him and to his works. Unkind words were so many darts which wounded his heart, and if anyone dared to speak uncharitably of others before him, the Saint immediately put a stop to it. His friend, the Count of Oropesa, was once bewailing the disorder and scandals that reigned in the world. "Your lordship need not grieve for these things," replied the Saint, "for there is a remedy for them." "What remedy," asked the Count, "can there be to such evils?" "A very easy one," was the answer, "you and I must first be what we ought to be, then we shall have cured what concerns ourselves, let each one do the same and the reform will be effectual. The worst of it is that everyone talks of reforming others without trying to correct his own faults, by this means evil remains unremedied everywhere." The Count of Oropesa was edified with the Saint's wise answer and profited thereby. We might further dwell on the tender charity of St. Peter towards the poor, the sick, and the afflicted, on his love of concord and of peace, suffice it to say that he was justly styled the Angel of Peace for having made peace not only in families but in whole towns.

Prayer took up a great part of St. Peter's time. At all hours, in all places, day or night, in his cell, in church, on the road, everywhere, in fact, he prayed and kept his heart in close union with God. The devil made unheard of efforts

to turn the Saint from prayer. In order to frighten him he took visible form and appeared to him in frightful visions. At other times the spirit of darkness hurled at him such a quantity of large stones that the noise awoke the other religious, and in the morning the floor was found strewn with them. These attacks, far from troubling him, only made the Saint persevere with greater ardour in prayer. God rewarded his faithfulness by bestowing on him the gift of sublime contemplation and making him one of the greatest masters in the science of prayer. St. Teresa understood from her first interview with St. Peter of Alcantara that he had long experience in Divine communications. "I gave him," she says, "an account of my life and method of prayer, and immediately I felt he understood me by his own experience. He enlightened me on every point and gave me clearly to understand the nature of ecstatic visions. The mutual outpouring of our souls was an inexpressible consolation to him."

St. Peter wrote a *Treatise on Prayer*, a work which called forth the admiration of St. Teresa and of Father Louis of Grenada. It was quickly circulated through Spain and was translated into all European languages. "As prayer," says St. Teresa "was his life during so many years, he speaks of it in this book in a most useful manner to those souls who give themselves up to this holy exercise. Gregory XV. said that this work had been written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. In the Pope's opinion our Saint was one of the most skilful masters of the interior life. In his Treatise on Prayer, St. Peter of Alcantara gives very wise advice on the discretion which spiritual persons should use. "There are some," "he says," who after having received from God some favour in prayer, know not how to mete out their time, or to exercise prudence in their devotions. This is, to my mind, dangerous. They give themselves up without moderation to prayer, watchings, and to bodily mortifications until nature faints beneath the burthen. In this

way, they end by unfitting themselves for all outward work and even for prayer. It is, then, very needful to use great discretion, chiefly in the beginning, when one has much fervour but little experience or prudence."

The prayer of St. Peter of Alcantara was generally accompanied by ecstacies and wonderful raptures. His body which was miraculously emancipated from the laws of this terrestrial world followed his soul as it soared towards Heaven. The Saint was often seen taking a rapid flight to the roof of the church, at other times hovering above the tops of the highest trees. At night while he prayed beneath the starlit sky, the shepherds in the neighbourhood beheld him kneeling at a considerable height in mid air. In these ærial flights, his body appeared transfigured, luminous and transparent as pure crystal, and partaking in some way of the splendour of a glorified body.

Once, in the garden of the convent at Pedroso, our Saint was gazing from afar on a large cross which he had had placed on the top of one of the surrounding hills. At the thought of our Lord's Passion, he was rapt into ecstacy, raised from the ground and carried through space until he reached the mountain-top, where he stopped before the cross, suspended in the air with out-stretched arms. From his eyes there streamed rays of light which lighted up the sign of man's redemption and from it there likewise darted radiant beams which shone on the face of the Saint. At the same time was seen poised in the air above his head, a shining cloud which formed a kind of pavilion. From this cloud were shed rays of light more resplendent than the sun which illuminated the whole mountain and part of the plain. Never had the serene sky of Estramadura shone with such splendour. The Religious of the convent had gathered round and were beholders of this imposing scene, unrivalled, perhaps, in the annals of the Church. Filled with admiration, fear, and awe, they prostrated themselves, they might have been taken for the Apostles on Mount Thabor. The

Saint, when he came to himself, appeared greatly confused and hastened to hide himself from the eyes of his brethren, returning directly to his cell.

While saying Mass he frequently fell into ecstacy. After the Consecration, he was carried away with the vehemence of Divine love, he was then seen raised from the ground, absorbed in God, sometimes for a long space. Returning to himself, he continued the Mass until the Communion, after which he was again rapt in God. Nevertheless, the Saint tried to hide, as much as he could, these supernatural gifts. Hearing one day some of the young Friars talking on the subject, he said to them, "Brethren, holiness does not consist in ecstacies. Let us serve God in spirit and in truth, binding ourselves to solid devotion, let us practise the law of God and good works, the rest is worth nothing." But these were not all the supernatural graces granted to St. Peter of Alcantara. God also favoured him with the gift of healing, of prophecy, of reading hearts, and of bilocation. Many are the facts cited by his biographers of these things.

On different occasions, the Saint miraculously supplied food to his religious, and it was sometimes sent by the hands of Angels. During his lifetime he appeared to many persons who were at a great distance. Having to cross the Guadiana, the Tagus, the Douro, and three other large rivers, each time he was seen to walk on the waters as if they were solid ground. Our Saint obtained from God, by his fervent prayers, the cessation of a drought and he caused a spring of water to gush up. Once as he was preaching in the open air, a torrent of rain fell, but his audience was miraculously preserved from the drenching shower. Another time when one of his convents was on fire, the Saint passed safely through the flames and quenched them. At the convent of Arenas, he planted his staff and by a miracle the dry branch took root at once, budded into leaf and flower, and in good time brought forth delicious fruit. The fig-tree of St. Peter of Alcantara continues to have a miraculous virtue. Once

as he was returning to Arenas, he was overtaken at night-fall by a heavy fall of snow, and no shelter was to be found but the ruins of an old hostel. He put his companion in safety in a hollow, but the Saint himself stood amidst the ruins exposed to the fury of the hurricane. By the Providence of God the snowflakes remained in the air and formed a sort of dome above his head, under which he comfortably spent the night. Thus God seemed to have endowed His faithful servant with some of His own Almighty power over creation.

St. Peter of Alcantara was often favoured with apparitions of our Blessed Lord, of our Lady, whose faithful servant he ever was, of St. Joseph, to whom he had a special devotion, of St. John the Evangelist, and of the Seraphic Patriarch. Once as St. Teresa was assisting at St. Peter's Mass she saw that he was attended by St. Francis as deacon and St. Antony of Padua as subdeacon. The Saint herself related this wonderful vision to persons to be depended on to whom she spoke of her relations with St. Peter of Alcantara. It must, nevertheless, be observed that God enriched St. Peter with these exceptional graces and adorned him with such great virtues only with a view to the mission which he was to fulfil in the Church. Faithful to his charge, our Saint showed the road to Heaven to numberless sinners, guided fervent souls in the narrow path of perfection, and produced in the great Family of the Friars Minor of the Observance a fresh budding forth of the seraphic spirit.

The whole life of St. Peter of Alcantara was consecrated to the welfare of souls. The first years of his life, however, were chiefly employed in preaching the Gospel, afterwards, notwithstanding the offices which he had to fulfil in the Order, he still found time to preach to the people. By preference, the Saint preached on the great truths of religion and, without troubling himself about ornate diction, he applied himself to make his gospel teaching intelligible to all hearers. A foe to worldly wisdom, he spoke the truth alike to all, to

rich and poor, to high and low, and he would never pander to the prejudices or the passions of the day. His words made a deep impression on his hearers, moreover, his very appearance, his emaciated features, his recollected mien, everything about him was a sermon. For many years he was seen going through the towns and villages of Andalusia preaching everywhere the Kingdom of God and penance. He spared nothing to gain souls. He went about on foot, braving the sun, rain, and snow, going where suffering called him, or the good of souls claimed his presence. In the exercise of his ministry, he preferred attending to the poor and lowly. While on the mission, his day was spent in preaching, in hearing confessions, catechising children, in visiting the poor and the sick, and in making peace between enemies, and the hours of night were passed in some retired spot where he could pray and subdue his body by scourgings unto blood. The servant of God knew that the blood of the apostle mingling with the Blood of Jesus Christ is a fruitful dew which predisposes souls to receive the light and the warmth of grace.

At the end of each mission, the Saint erected a large cross, either in the public squares, or at cross-roads, or, by preference, on a mountain top, to stand as a reminder to the people of the truths he had preached to them, but chiefly to engrave in all hearts the memory of the great benefit of Redemption. It is thus he raised one on the famous Pic de la Gata. He ordered an enormous cross to be made which two strong men could hardly have lifted, he wished to reserve for himself the honour of bearing, alone, this precious burthen. He ascended the mountain on his knees carrying this enormous cross and bathing the road with blood which ran from his bruised limbs. When he reached the summit, he lifted without any trouble his heavy burthen and set it up unaided in the hollow prepared for it. The custom of erecting Mission Crosses afterwards spread through Spain and Europe.

Manifold were the fruits produced by the preaching of our Saint, the number of sinners whom he converted is incalculable. Worldly men, and nobles of the highest rank reformed their lives and began to tread the paths of perfection, wearing the habit of the Third Order of St. Francis, while others fled from the world in order to sanctify themselves in the cloister. St. Peter of Alcantara established the Order of Penance in many towns. By his advice, many Poor Clare Convents were founded, especially the one in Lisbon. The Infanta Donna Maria was foundress thereof and many maidens of the Court entered there as nuns. He also guided many truly holy souls in the way of perfection. St. Peter of Alcantara was one of the greatest masters of the spiritual life in those provinces where John of Avila, Louis of Granada, Balthazar Alvarez, and so many other venerable persons enlightened in the guidance of souls were already to be found.

A life so holy and marked by such wonders, drew on St. Peter of Alcantara universal admiration, people came from all parts to see him, and to ask his advice, and to beg the aid of his prayers. The highest and most holy persons of his day wished to be in communication with him. The Count of Oropesa, so devotedly attached to the Saint, the Counts of Mirabel, of Niebla, of Torrejon, of Chiaves, and many other Grandees of Spain, thought it an honour to receive him in their palaces and to be directed by him. John III. King of Portugal, asked the superiors of the Saint to allow him to come to the Court, as he desired to consult with him upon different matters which concerned his conscience and affairs of State. This prince afterwards declared that the holiness of St. Peter of Alcantara far exceeded his reputation. Prince Louis, brother of the King, and the Infanta Maria, wished to put themselves under the direction of the man of God. Many great lords of the Court touched by his words and the

sanctity of his life were converted, some even entered Religion. At the Court of Spain the Saint was held in no less veneration, Charles V. said of him that he belonged not to earth, but that he was an angel from Heaven.

Eminent prelates, the bishops of Avila, of Coria, of Piacenza, of Badajos, of Toledo, looked upon Peter of Alcantara as an apostle, and vied with each other in inviting him into their dioceses. The venerable John of Avila, justly called the apostle of Andalusia, desired to see St. Peter whose holiness was so universally acknowledged. He invited our Saint to Seville where they held familiar intercourse. Louis of Granada, of the Order of St. Dominic, was one of the most ardent admirers of the Saint, he often visited him and sought his advice. Louis once begged of St. Peter to ask of God in prayer to what end he should direct his labours. The Saint replied that instead of preaching he ought to write, and that his writings would be of the greatest use to souls desirous of advancing in the way of perfection. Immediately Louis of Granada began to write his treatise on Prayer, and, later on, he published, his other works which are known to be full of heavenly doctrine.

St. Francis Borgia, of the Society of Jesus, was also knit in close friendship with St. Peter of Alcantara. Writing to him on the twenty-second of August, 1557, he says, "Your great labours are, as God knows, the consolation of my life. Gladly would I come and lodge beneath the roof of your poor solitude and I should think myself in Paradise, but I learn that our Lord has called the good Bishop of Badajos to Himself. The stay I had intended making in that town being now no object, I shall go straight to Evora. In Portugal, I shall attend to the affairs of your Reverence. On my return, please God, I will see you and we can talk together. . . . ."

We have spoken of the relations which existed between St. Peter of Alcantara and St. Teresa, whose first and principal cooperator he was in the Reform of Carmel.

God had prepared the Virgin of Avila for this great work by bestowing on her exceptional graces, nevertheless those to whom she spoke, and from whom she expected to receive light to guide her inexperience, thought she was walking in false and dangerous ways. Her directors, her superiors, men, otherwise, of enlightened mind, free from prejudice and passion, considered that she was deluded, and judged the work of God in her to be the work of Satan. This brought upon the Saint trials, afflictions, and persecutions which lasted many years. In 1558, a religious of the Company of Jesus, Father Balthasar Alvarez, a very spiritual man was called to be her director, but this fresh direction exercised under the influence of those around her, only served to increase her trouble and perplexity. Things came to such a pass that Teresa of Jesus feared that no confessor would have anything to do with her. "I feared," she says, "the time would come when I should get no one to be my confessor, and that all would fly from me. I did nothing but weep, my anguish was enough to cause me to lose my mind."

God willed to put an end to the trials of His handmaid, and He sent to her St. Peter of Alcantara whose life was already far spent. From their first interview, St. Teresa felt comforted. She laid open her whole soul to the Saint, she gave him an account of her life, of her method of prayer, and of the favours with which God had overwhelmed her. For the first time she had the happiness of feeling that she was understood. The skilful guide whose light she sought, assured her that God was the Author of the visions and of the wonders which were wrought in her. He consoled and encouraged her, giving her advice for the future. The Saint did not stop here, he considered it to be his duty to set right public opinion. He first sought Father Balthasar Alvarez, the director of St. Teresa, and gave him good reasons for believing that her visions were truly from God, and that for the future instead of disquieting her he should reassure and

encourage her. Father Balthasar Alvarez yielded to the lights and experience of the man of God. Peter of Alcantara took the same step with the Bishop of Avila, who was likewise prejudiced against St. Teresa, and he spoke to and successively enlightened all those who had hitherto been hostile to her.

These happy results are stated by Diego of Yepez, Bishop of Taragona, in his life of St. Teresa. "Father Peter of Alcantara," he writes, "had intimate conversations with the holy Mother, and he could appriciate, better than any one else, her lofty mind and the holiness of her life. He it was who, by the authority of his character, gained over the prejudiced bishop to the holy Reformer. He had so high an opinion of the holiness of Teresa that he used to say that after the truths of faith, nothing seemed to him more certain than the work of the Holy Ghost in her. And, indeed, he always helped her in her trials and in her foundations." Father Diego Banez, a Dominican friar, who later on was St. Teresa's director, bears similar testimony to our Saint.

Teresa having fallen into fresh perplexities, through contradictions raised anew against her, the Saint, to whom she had made known her trouble, wrote to reassure and comfort her, he addressed to her a remarkabte paper in which he lays down with admirable precision the rules for the discernment of spirits. The mission of St. Peter of Alcantara to the Virgin of Avila did not end here, he was to be her first cooperator in the work of the Reform of Carmel. The convent of the Incarnation at Avila, in which St. Teresa dwelt, as well as the other houses of the Order, did not keep the Carmelite Rule given in 1209 and approved by Honorius III. in its integrity. The Saint was inspired by our Lord to leave her community and to found a new house where the Rule should be strictly observed. An express order to employ herself about this work was given to her over and over again. The project met with great opposition, Teresa

was treated as mad and as a visionary, and she was even blamed and disowned by her own superiors.

In this difficult position, Teresa had recourse to the lights of St. Peter of Alcantara. She wrote to him telling him of what had happened. The Saint replied that she was to obey the orders of God. He begged of her to let no obstacle stand in her way, and to rely on the aid of St. Joseph to whom the new house was to be dedicated. Shortly afterwards, St. Peter came to see St. Teresa at Avila and told her what means to take for beginning the work of the Reform, and desired that she should at once ask for the needful Brief for the foundation. The man of God then busied himself in preparing subjects for the new Carmel. A young girl of noble family, Isabella Ortega, who was thinking of entering the royal convent of Poor Clares at Madrid, went to consult him in order to make sure of God's Will in her regard. The Saint replied, "My child, I commend your pious design, but you will not enter our community at Madrid, although it contains some holy and virtuous souls. God wills that you should become a nun in the Reformed Carmel which is to be founded at Avila." Isabella seemed troubled and dissatisfied with this answer, the more so as the project of reform seemed to her to be impracticable. "My child," answered the Saint, "God will soon scatter these clouds, He will inspire other religious of the same Order to quit their shoes and stockings to embrace the Reform and thus the new Institute of religious will be confirmed." The prophecy of St. Peter of Alcantara was fulfilled in every point in course of time. About the year 1561, as our Saint was passing through Avila, Teresa asked him if the new Carmel should, according to the primitive Rule, possess no revenues. The servant of God pronounced decidedly in favour of the strictest poverty and cited the example of the Poor Clares of the royal convent at Madrid, who belonging to the highest families in the kingdom, had resolved, following the example of their holy

Foundress, to possess nothing in this world and to live on charity.

At the end of the same year, 1561, Teresa would have liked that the Saint should come to Avila to have his advice about some business connected with the new foundation. God worked a double miracle in favour of His handmaid, St. Peter knew by revelation what the Saint desired to say to him, and, without quitting the convent of Arenas, he appeared to her and gave her the advice she wanted.

In the beginning of the year 1562, Teresa of Jesus being at Toledo, at the house of the Marchioness Louisa de la Cerda, she invited the servant of God to repair to this city. She told him of the difficulties which had arisen against the project of founding the new Carmel without any revenue. So many plausible and pressing reasons were urged in favour of revenue that the Saint did not know what to reply. This great lover of holy poverty answered without hesitation that the houses of the Reform should be established without revenues. He solved all doubts and confirmed Teresa in her original design. Hearing that the Bishop of Avila was on the opposite side, the Saint, notwithstanding his age and infirmities, went to the prelate and ended by gaining his consent. Our Lord had appeared to him, and let him know His will that the new Carmel should be founded without revenue and according to the rules of the strictest poverty.

This matter having been settled satisfactorily, St. Teresa was exposed to fresh contradictions. Theologians and canonists persisted in censuring the absolute poverty she wished to embrace. The Saint was troubled at this persistent opposition and referred her anxiety to the servant of God. In reply she got that magnificent letter, dated April fourteenth 1562, which Father Francis of St. Mary, the Carmelite annalist, calls an explanation, and almost a page of the Gospel. We give an extract from this document, as following, "Reverend Mother, may the Holy Ghost fill the soul of your holiness. I have received the letter which you

addressed to me by Don Gonzalez of Aranda. I confess I am surprised to see that you have called in learned men to solve a question which they are not competent to judge. Litigation and cases of conscience may belong to the province of canonists and theologians. Questions as to the perfect life are only to be treated of by those who lead this kind of life. To be able to handle a matter it is needful to know something about it. It is not for a learned man to decide if you and I shall or shall not practise the Evangelical Counsels. To question this would be already the beginning of unfaithfulness. The counsel of our Lord is always good, it only seems impracticable to incredulity or to human prudence. He who gives the counsel will provide the means. However bad they may be, men, if they give advice, desire that it should succeed. Would Divine Wisdom alone have given impracticable advice? If your holiness is resolved to follow the most perfect way, nothing can hinder it. The counsel of Jesus Christ is for women as well as for men, and it will succeed with you as with those others before you who have followed it. . . . The abuses in monasteries which have given up revenues, spring from this, that poverty is endured in them, rather than desired. I only praise poverty inasmuch as it is borne with patience, desired and sought after for love of Jesus Crucified. In this as in all else, I believe firmly and without wavering in the words of the Master. I consider the Evangelical Counsels excellent, because they are Divine, and, while acknowledging that they are not binding under pain of sin, I believe it to be more perfect and more pleasing to God to follow them, than not to follow them. On our Lord's authority I look upon the poor in spirit, the voluntary poor, as happy. I could in this matter cite my own experience had I not more faith in the word of God than in my vain experience. May the Lord enlighten your holiness, and make this truth clear to your mind and give you courage to follow it. . . . Those who do not follow the counsels may, it is true, be saved

through keeping the commandments, but in general they are wanting in light and are bad judges in matters of high spirituality. It will then be wiser to prefer to their advice the advice of our Lord, Who gives, with the counsel, the means of carrying it out, and Who rewards eternally those, who renouncing earthly things put all their trust in Him."

This letter produced a deep impression on the mind of the holy Reformer. She followed the wise counsel of her venerable cooperator, and nothing again was able to shake her. St. Peter of Alcantara had gone to Avila, in order to hasten the work of handing over the new convent, for he longed to see the work ended before he died. About the middle of the year 1562, St. Teresa left Toledo to return to Avila, at the same time St. Peter of Alcantara, then sick at Arenas, was ordered by our Lord to go back to this town. The powers of hell had raised a storm against the work of the Reform. The inhabitants would not hear of a foundation without revenues, the project of the Reformer was treated as folly, and, under the pressure of public opinion, the bishop had withdrawn his approval. The Saint knew that this storm was raised by the evil spirits, and was not troubled thereby. He had interviews with one after another of the most powerful opponents of the Reform, made them listen to the truth, and little by little quieted them. The bishop, also, was brought back to his former decision. Meanwhile the Brief for the foundation came. The finishing stroke of handing over the convent was hastened on, and four postulants, chosen and prepared by the Saint himself, formed the nucleus of the Reform. Everything was ready for the inauguration of the new Carmel, but in order to give time for the ferment of public opinion to calm down, the taking possession of the convent of St. Joseph was put off. The community was finally installed on the twenty-fourth of August, 1562, on that day was laid the basis of the Reform of the Order of Mount Carmel.

St. Peter of Alcantara was not present at this ceremony.

He had prepared everything, had recommended the work to the bishop, and had then withdrawn from Avila, called elsewhere by the duties of his office. St. Teresa, in bidding him farewell, knew that she would never see him again on earth. She thanked him warmly for his many services and recommended herself to his prayers. Her gratitude is perpetuated in the following words written in the history of her life; "He it was, "she says," *who really did everything*. If he had not come on this occasion, I do not know how we could have succeeded. The holy old man spent eight days at the most with us, he was ill, and God soon after called him to Himself. His Divine Majesty seems to have prolonged his life only to bring our work to a happy ending for, if I mistake not, his strength was utterly exhausted two years since."

St. Peter of Alcantara was, then, the chief promoter of the Reform of Carmel and St. Teresa's first cooperator. St. John of the Cross, the second cooperator with the venerable Reformer, did not enter the Order till 1563, one year after the death of St. Peter of Alcantara. In 1568, he established the first convent of Barefooted Carmelites, and was associated with St. Teresa in the propagation of the Reform. Father Francis of St. Mary, the annalist of the Barefooted Carmelites, after making mention of the work of St. Peter of Alcantara in aid of the seraphic Mother Teresa, declares that her Reform honours him as its father, "Nostra Reformatio . . . plena voce nominat patrem." We read, farther, in the Decree of Canonization of St. Peter of Alcantara. "He helped St. Teresa with unwearied zeal in the establishment of the Reform of Carmel, in such a way that, according to the testimony of the illustrious virgin, he ought to be considered as the *principal promoter* of this Reform. To this end, he took many journeys, bore much fatigue, and appeared, more than once, to the Saint to help her with his advice.

Four days before his death, the Saint wished to write to his spiritual daughter. "Some time before quitting his

exile," says St. Teresa, "he wrote to me. Having heard of the opposition made against our foundation and of the persecution we had to suffer, he felt, he said, extreme joy. According to him, this storm raised by the evil one was a sign that our Lord would be faithfully served by us. I ought, he added, never to consent to possess revenues. This recommendation he repeated two or three times. If I followed this advice he guaranteed that the work would succeed to our hearts' desire. From Heaven, the Saint continued to protect his dear family of Carmel, many times he appeared to St. Teresa, and gave her instructions in the interests of the Reform. The Seraphic Mother declares that he was not less useful after his death than he had been in his lifetime. If obstacles arose in her foundations, the Saint appeared to her in order to encourage her and to point out the means to overcome the difficulty. When he used to appear to her he would often recall to her mind the advice which he had formerly given her on the subject of holy poverty. As the Seraphic Mother was building the garden wall of the convent at Avila, she told the workmen to plaster it with lime so that it might be stronger. The Saint appeared and warned her that this was against poverty, he added that the dwelliugs of the evangelically poor should be different from the houses of the rich. The holy Mother wished to explain her reasons for using lime. "If the wall falls, "replied the Saint, "there will always be found some one to build it up again." Having said these words he disappeared. The union which existed between St. Peter of Alcantara and St. Teresa has been perpetuated ever since between the members of the two Orders.[2]

[2] There are yet other recollections which bind the sons of Carmel to the disciples of St. Francis. When the two patriarchs, St. Dominic and St. Francis, met in Rome, in the church of St. John Lateran, St. Angelo, of the Order of Carmel, was then preaching in this basilica, and from the pulpit he declared that two pillars of the Church were to be found among his audience. After he had ended his sermon, he saluted

The works of St. Peter of Alcantara were no less fruitful in extending the spirit of the Seraphic Patriarch in his Order. We have seen that in 1515, he joined the Barefooted Friars of the Custody of the Holy Gospel or of Estramadura. A few words may here be added as to the origin of this branch of the family of the Friars Minor of the Observance of which Peter of Alcantara became the propagator.

Blessed John of Puebla, the eldest son of Alfonso of Sotomayor, Count of Belalcazar and allied to the royal family of Spain, made a journey to Rome about the year 1480. At this time, the Friars Minor of the Observance had revived the spirit of the Seraphic Patriarch throughout the world. The fervour which reigned in their communities made a great impression on the Spanish gentleman, and made him desire to join this religious family. After spending ten years with the Friars of the Observance in Italy, Blessed John of Puebla returned to Spain where the Observance had been established at the beginning of the century by St. Peter Regalati, Blessed Peter of Villacrete, Blessed Peter Santoyo,

the two Saints, and congratulated them on the abundant fruit which they would produce in souls, and he foretold to St. Francis that he would receive the miraculous impression of the Stigmata; and in his turn, St. Francis prophesied that St. Angelo would suffer martyrdom. On account of this connection between St. Angelo and St. Francis, the Prior General of the Carmelites, begged, at the General Chapter of the Observance, held at Victoria in 1694, that more intimate relations should be established between the two Orders. On this occasion, the Office of our Lady of Mount Carmel was introduced into our Order. The general Constitutions of the Friars Minor of the Observance further bear this prescription: "We desire that respect and charity be exercised above all towards the Friars Preachers, as we shall say later on; then towards the Carmelites, for this reason that close charity and a mutual communication of the secrets of Heaven knit St. Angelo, martyr of the Order of Carmel with our Holy Father, St. Francis. On this account we ordain to all, and to each, to cultivate and to show, on every opportunity, that holy and mutual friendship which binds us to the Religious of this Order.

and Blessed Lopez of Salazar. In 1490, he founded on the heights of Sierra Morena, the convent of our Lady of the Angels, and established an austere Custody of the Observance, called the Custody of the Holy Angels, which was always under the Vicar General of the Ultramontane Observance.

After the death of Blessed John of Puebla which took place in 1497, Blessed John of Guadaloupe, one of his disciples, left, about the year 1500, the Custody of the Holy Angels, in order to found, outside the Observance, the Custody of the Holy Gospel, with much stricter Constitutions. His followers were, at first, called "Brothers of the Holy Gospel," and also "Brothers of the Capouch.' They have since been named Barefooted Friars, as in the beginning they went barefoot and without sandals. Blessed John of Guadaloupe, promoter of the Barefooted Friars in Spain and in Portugal, fell asleep in the Lord in the year 1506.

Some years later, in 1515, St. Peter of Alcantara joined, as we have said, the Barefooted Friars, who at this time were still separated from the Friars of the Observance. But, in 1517, Leo X. incorporated the Branch of the Barefooted Friars into the great Family of the Observance. This branch consisted only of the Custody of the Holy Gospel in Spain and the Custody of Pity in Portugal. In 1519, Blessed Gabriel Mary, Commissary General of the Ultramontane Friars of the Observance, erected the Custody of the Holy Gospel into a Province, under the title of St. Gabriel. It may be observed that notwithstanding their fusion with the Observance, the Barefooted Friars kept to their own customs and name, they were called "Barefooted Friars of the Observance." It will be seen that St. Peter of Alcantara afterwards left the Province of St. Gabriel to found the Province of St. Joseph with still stricter constitutions.

As soon as the Custody of the Holy Gospel, incorporated

into the Observance, was erected into a Province, under the title of St. Gabriel, Father Angelo of Valladolid was elected Provincial Minister. This zealous superior resolved, according to the advice of the Definitor, to found a new convent of Barefooted Friars of the Observance at Badajos, to satisfy the long expressed wish of the inhabitants of this town. Peter of Alcantara, who had only been six years in religion, was, as we have said, placed at the head of this foundation, and he revived among the religious confided to his care, the first fervour of the Seraphic Order. Ordained priest in 1524, he successively filled the office of Guardian, in the Convents of our Lady of the Angels of Piacenza, of Badajos, and of St. Onuphrius. Wherever he went he gave proofs of his consummate wisdom. Fired by his example, his religious walked with rapid steps in the paths of perfection.

During the course of the year 1538, the Barefooted Friars of the Observance, of the Province of St. Gabriel, held a Chapter in the convent of the Mother of God near to Albuquerque. Father Peter of Alcantara, then thirty-nine years of age, was unanimously elected Provincial. Alarmed at this nomination, he threw himself on his knees and with tears in his eyes he implored of the brethren to vote for some one else. But the election was held to and he was obliged to accept the Will of God.

The first care of the new Provincial was to study the spiritual needs of the flock entrusted to his care. To this end he undertook to visit the different communities of the Province of St. Gabriel. These journeys he made on foot, taking no food with him, contenting himself with a little bread which was given to him out of charity. At night, he would seek out some isolated barn where he could escape the notice of the country people. If some benefactor offered him hospitality, he humbly accepted the invitation, and his visit was generally marked by some grace obtained by him for his host.

When he came to a convent, he would have no comforts,

and however wearied he might be, he was always the first at the offices. Of all monastic virtues, fraternal charity was perhaps the one which St. Peter recommended the most strongly to his religious. In general he rebuked with extreme mildness and only showed severity towards slanderers and those who sowed the seeds of discord and trouble.

The care of the sick was most particularly enjoined by him, and he himself looked after their wants and waited on them with tender charity. If the infirmarian begged of the Saint to let him attend to them, Peter would answer, "This is one of my first duties and if by chance there was any negligence with respect to the sick, it is from me rather than from you that God will exact an account.

The observances, established by Blessed John of Guadaloupe for the Barefooted Friars, did not appear sufficient to satisfy the aspirations of the soul of this great servant of God. After consulting God in prayer, he wrote out more complete and stricter Constitutions than those which had hitherto been observed and it was a great consolation to him to see them approved of by the intermediary Congregation assembled, in 1540, at the convent of Piacenza. These new Constitutions were sent, with the acts of the Congregation, to all the convents of the Province and immediately put in practice. Our Saint was very solicitous about strengthening the reform introduced into the Province, in choosing for novice masters men who were zealous for the rules of the Institute, and in appointing superiors animated by the spirit of their vocation and lovers of holy poverty. When his three years of office were ended, he thought only of living in retirement in order to give himself up to contemplation. But God had other views, He destined him to found in Portugal the Province of Arabida.

At this time, a great servant of God, Father Martin of St. Mary, was leading the life of a hermit on the rocky summits of Arabida which overlooked the sea shore. This solitary spot had been given to him by his kinsman, the

duke of Aveiro, nephew to the king of Portugal. The venerable religicus had obtained from the Minister General faculties to receive the Friars of the Observance who wished to share his manner of life. In the beginning, a companion had joined him and then had left him. The duke of Aveiro, troubled at the loneliness of his relation, wrote to St. Peter of Alcantara, whom he had known when he came to the court at Lisbon, and proposed that he should join Father Martin in his solitude. The Saint consulted about it with Father John of Aquila who was on his way back from the Indies, the two friars thought that their presence in Portugal might be the means of spreading the reform of the Barefooted Friars of the Observance. They started, accordingly, in 1542, for Arabida, after getting leave from the Provincial.

There were, at that time, in Portugal, two Provinces of Friars of the Observance and one Province of Barefooted Friars of the Observance under the title of our Lady of Compassion. The holy solitaries of Arabida were about to lay the foundation of a new Province. Their days were spent in prayer, contemplation, and the practice of the most austere penance. Soon after some other friars of the Province of St. Gabriel joined them, and God was glorified by the holiness of the devout dwellers in this solitude. In the meanwhile, Father Joseph Calvi, Minister General of the Order, came to Portugal to make a visitation of the convents of the Observance. He was greatly edified by the poverty of the Barefooted Friars of Arabida and by the holiness of their life. He again authorised Father Martin of St. Mary to receive subjects, and his secretary, captivated by the virtue of our Saint, asked leave to remain in the hermitage. The Marquis of Nissa offered the General to found a convent near Palhaïs. Peter of Alcantara was nominated superior of this new community and charged with the direction of the novices. This new Custody of Barefooted Friars thus began to spread. During his sojourn at Palhaïs, our Saint

came many times to the Court of Lisbon. Prince Louis, brother of the king, and Dona Maria, their sister, had placed themselves under his direction and they wished to confer with the man of God. His presence confirmed the good which he had wrought, some years before, among the grandees of the Court.

After spending two years in Portugal, the servant of God and Father John of Aquila, his companion, were recalled by their superiors to the Province of St. Gabriel, but on the death of Father Martin of St. Mary, about the year 1548, they were sent back again at the request of prince Louis, in order to watch over the infant Custody of Arabida, which seemed in a tottering condition. The Saint remained here till the year 1551, and in quitting Portugal, he left behind him Father John of Aquila. This venerable friar was, later, appointed superior of the Custody, he raised it into a Province in 1560, and was its holy ruler for more than thirty years.

On his return to the Province of St. Gabriel, St. Peter of Alcantara learnt that he had been named Definitor. In 1553, he was deputed to assist, with the Provincial, at the General Chapter convoked at Salamanca. After the Chapter was over, feeling the need of greater recollection, he got leave to go to a retired convent of the Province, and there, unfettered by the cares of active life, he gave himself up wholly to contemplation. During this time of solitude in which he shed many holy tears, he was inspired by God to establish a still stricter reform than that of the Barefooted Friars of the Province of St. Gabriel. Don Rodriguez Chaves, one of his spiritual sons, obtained a Brief from Rome to this effect, and the servant of God announced to his superior his intention of leaving the Province. The latter was exceedingly grieved on hearing of the Saint's resolution. Peter of Alcantara was one of the strongest pillars of the Province of St. Gabriel, so that his departure would make a great blank, nevertheless he could not but comply with the Brief of the Sovereign Pontiff.

St. Peter of Alcantara took with him Father Michael of Catena, the most devoted of his disciples, and they proceeded to Coria and presented themselves to the bishop of this town. The prelate received them joyfully, and offered them a hermitage, where the Saint passed several months in profound retirement. He only received the bishop, Henriquez of Almansa and his brother, the count of Nieva, both of whom were under his direction. During his long hours of prayer he felt more than ever fired with the desire to carry out his plans.

A bitter sadness filled the heart of the Saint at the sight of the evils which afflicted the Church at this time and the countless souls who were being drawn into apostacy by the revolt of Luther. He felt, like the Seraphic Patriarch, the need of setting up the standard of the Cross and of gathering together the choicest members among the brethren to fight under its banner. He longed to send forth his religious to reconquer souls so as to make amends for the great losses which apostacy was causing the Church.

God granted the desire of His servant. The disciples of St. Peter of Alcantara lent their powerful aid to the great apostolic works undertaken in the sixteenth century by the Friars Minor of the Observance, and they supplied many recruits as evangelic labourers sent to the Philippine Islands, to Japan, and to the vast provinces of the New World.

In fulfilment of a revelation made to him by our Lord, St. Peter of Alcantara, before undertaking anything, went to Rome to lay his views before Pope Julius III. who then filled the See of Peter. This was in the year 1555. In the Eternal city his first care was to venerate the tomb of the Holy Apostles. He then paid visits to the other sacred shrines, never ceasing to recommend to God the business which had brought him to the feet of the Vicar of Christ. Father Clement Dolera, the Minister General, was unfavourable to the views of St. Peter of Alcantara, he feared that the project would do harm to the unity of the Order,

established in 1517, by Leo X. in his "Bull of union," and that it would be the cause of trouble and division. Neither did the Pope show himself more disposed to further the new scheme. The servant of God humbly accepted these first trials, and without being discouraged, he redoubled his austerities and his prayers. Some time afterwards, he begged of the Sovereign Pontiff to grant him the favour of another audience. This time, contrary to all expectation, the Pope granted the request of St. Peter, and, for fear he should be troubled by his own religious, he separated him from the Province of St. Gabriel and put him under the jurisdiction of the Minister General of the Conventuals. Peter of Alcantara and his disciples took, from this time, the name of "Reformed Conventuals," which they kept for six years, until the time when the Saint returned to the Observance, and definitely placed himself under the jurisdiction of the Minister General of the whole Order of Friars Minor.

On his return to Spain, the servant of God had to undergo severe trials, but his virtue gained the victory over all obstacles. Besides it was with patience and humility that he intended to lay the foundation of the Reform. Soon, many religious of rare virtue joined him and became his helpers.

The first convent of the Reform was founded at Pedroso, in the diocese of Piacenza, on a spot which had been given to the Saint by Don Rodriguez of Chaves. Nothing could be poorer than this dwelling, worthy in all respects of Him Who had not where to lay His head. The cells were like tombs, the doors were so low that no one could enter without stooping. When asked the reason of this arrangement, the Saint replied, "These doors will remind the religious that they are dead to the world and that the gate of Heaven is narrow." As to the dimensions of the convent itself, it was only thirty-two feet long and eight wide. The austere mode of life led by the religious seemed to exceed human strength.

For food, they contented themselves with one plate of vegetables, prepared on Sunday for the remainder of the week. Wine, flesh, fish and milk were absolutely forbidden. Long hours of the day and night were spent in prayer, contemplation, and in most rigorous penance. These holy men frequently scourged themselves to blood, they slept on boards and sometimes on the bare ground. Some among them wore a kind of metal hairshirt, others chains of iron. Their lives were thus consumed in the slow fire of the martyrdom of penance.

Truly, the lives of the Saints is a mystery. But is not Calvary a mystery also and the greatest one of all? To make amends for the great disorders of the sixteenth century, which brought desolation and ruin on the Church of God, the Saints of God offered up their lives in self-oblation.

Before long there were many houses of the new Reform. Father Paschal, an old disciple of Blessed John of Guadaloupe, had founded, in Galicia, four convents of the Reform under the jurisdiction of the Master General of the Conventuals, on the death of this venerable religious these houses were offered to St. Peter of Alcantara, who joined them to Pedroso, and formed a Custody, under the title of St. Joseph. In 1556 the General of the Conventuals confirmed the erection of the Custody, and named our Saint, Commissary General of the Reformed Conventuals in Spain. The newly appointed Superior immediately began a visitation of the five communities. He inculcated the spirit of reform into the minds of the religious and everywhere put in practice the observances followed in the convent of Pedroso. Towards the year 1558, the Saint withdrew to the last named community to give himself up to contemplation. It was then that our Lord bade him go to St. Teresa to be her consoling angel. In fact, from this time date his relations with the illustrious Reformer of Carmel.

As St. Peter of Alcantara drew towards the end of his hard working and holy career, ecstacies, raptures, and

wonders of all kinds were multiplied in his regard. The people surrounded him with every sign of respect and veneration. The work which he had been commissioned to do was visibly blessed by God. The religious of the Reform followed with heroic fervour in the footsteps of their Father. In the year 1561, he assembled the brethren in Chapter, at Villaviciosa. Nine houses had already been established, others were about to be founded, the time seemed to be come to make use of the faculty granted by the Sovereign Pontiff, and to form the Custody into a Province. The Saint took the opportunity of this assembly to publish the Constitutions which were to govern the new Reform. These rules are of such perfection and severity that they have never been equalled in any of the Branches of the Seraphic Order. After holding the Chapter, the servant of God wrote to St. Teresa to tell her that the Custody had been formed into a Province, under the title of St. Joseph, and, in order to induce her to take this glorious Patriarch as the protector of the first house of the Reform which she was about to found, he told her that the consolation which he had experienced on this occasion had made him forget all the fatigue, trials, and tribulations which hitherto he had had to bear.

In the first months of the year 1562, St. Peter of Alcantara and his friars begged Pope Pius IV. for permission to return again to the Friars Minor of the Observance, and to be thus under the jurisdiction of the Minister General of the whole Order of Friars Minor, at the same time keeping to their own Constitutions. The Sovereign Pontiff, in his Bull *In suprema militantis Ecclesiæ*, granted their request. This papal document expressly says, "The Reformed Conventuals of Spain have petitioned the Holy See, having deliberated in Chapter and being come to the conclusion that reunion with the Observance would be a greater help to the practice of religious perfection and will be a more effectual aid to the prosperity and spread of the Province.[3] From this

[3] See this Bull in the *Annales Minorum*, Vol. XIX., p. 574.

time, the disciples of St. Peter of Alcantara were no longer distinct from those of Blessed John of Guadaloupe who then held the Province of St. Gabriel in Spain and two Custodies in Portugal. Reunited under the name of "Barefooted Friars of the Observance" or "Alcantarines," they formed one of the Branches of the great family of the Observance. The Barefooted Friars increased rapidly not only in Spain and Portugal, but also in the Philippine Islands, Japan, China, the Molucca Islands, and the New World. They had as many as twenty Provinces, and gave to the Observance twenty-two servants of God whom the Church has canonized.

On the eighteenth of October, 1562, St. Peter of Alcantara was about to end his earthly exile and enter his eternal home. On his death-bed, he desired to speak to his disciples, to strengthen them in the principles of the life of perfection which he had taught them. "My sons," said he, "in separating you from the world, God has chosen you for His servants, He has loved you as children, He has, in a miraculous way, many times supplied your wants. Correspond to so many benefits by steadfast fidelity to the Rule. If trials come, think of our Seraphic Father and of his first companions. Observe holy poverty. Poverty is the heir-loom which Jesus Christ, born in a stable and dying on a Cross, has left to us and ours, and which St. Francis has transmitted to us." He then exhorted them to give themselves up to the practice of unceasing prayer and penance, to walk in the way of the Cross, of self-denial, and of sacrifice.

As his last hour drew near, the Saint was comforted by a heavenly vision. His cell was lighted up with supernatural light, our Blessed Lady vouchsafed to appear to him bearing the Child Jesus in her arms, and at the side of Mary stood St. John the Evangelist. After receiving the Last Sacraments with angelic devotion, he begged pardon of the friars for the bad example which he said he had given. He then recited the Psalm "I cried unto the Lord with my voice,"

and while repeating the first verse of the Psalm "I was glad at the things that were said unto me, We will go into the house of the Lord," he fell asleep in the peace of the Lord.

At the moment of his death, a bright and heavenly light shone in his cell, and angels were heard singing a sweet melody. On leaving this earth, the Saint appeared to St. Teresa and said, "O happy penance which has gained for me so much glory." St. Teresa, too, knew, by revelation, the great power which St. Peter of Alcantara enjoyed before God. "Our Lord," she said, "has assured me that anything asked in the name of His servant He will grant. I have often begged the Saint to present my petitions to God and they have always been heard." This promise of our Lord is found mentioned in the response to the eighth lesson in the Office of the Saint: "Qui famulæ tuæ Teresiæ dixisti *te semper in Petri nomine petentes exauditurum*, exaudi propter eum preces nostras."

St. Peter of Alcantara died in the convent at Arenas and his body was buried in the community church. Six persons were raised to life and many other miracles were wrought through his intercession. Clement IX. inscribed his name among the Saints. His feast is kept on this day by the whole Church as a Double; in the Franciscan Order and by the Barefooted Carmelites, as a Double of the Second Class. The Friars Minor of the Observance have a proper Office in his honour.

October 22.

Blessed Ladislaus of Gielnow, Priest.

[1505.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

Ladislaus was born at Gielnow, a town in the diocese of Gnesen in the kingdom of Poland.[1] From his earliest years our Lord spoke to his heart, and obedient to the voice of God the child gave himself without reserve to Him Who alone had the right to the first fruits of his life.

Having finished his elementary studies in his native town, his parents sent him to the university at Cracow, and after making great progress both in learning and virtue, he bade farewell to the world, and embraced the religious life at Warsaw with the Friars Minor of the Observance, then quite recently founded by St. John Capistran. This was in the year 1464. Ladislaus gave himself up with so much zeal to a life of perfection that he was soon looked upon as a model of religious virtues by his brethren. Fasts, watchings, and other austerities, were to him an indispensable element of spiritual life. Profound humility, perfect obedience, and above all great zeal for the maintenance of the purity of the Rule was the characteristic of his sanctity. Our Lord also favoured Ladislaus with gifts of contemplation, ecstacies, and raptures, during which he was often seen raised above the earth. This servant of God devoted his

1 We take as our authority, the life of Blessed Ladislaus, published at Warsaw, in 1633, by Father Vincent Morawski and republished by the Bollandists, for the fourth of May.

whole life to apostolic ministrations. Directly he had been ordained he asked to be allowed to join a mission to the Kalmuck Tartars, a horde steeped in the darkness of infidelity, but the Grand Duke of Russia having put obstacles in the way of this holy enterprise, these fervent missionaries were obliged to return to Poland. On returning to his country Ladislaus set to work with ardour to preach the word of God to his countrymen, going through both towns and villages to preach the kingdom of God to all. His vivid and persuasive eloquence was a powerful addition to his striking miracles, and noted sanctity, so that people crowded round his pulpit, and numbers of sinners returned to a virtuous life.

Our Lord's Passion was the ordinary subject of his meditations, and Ladislaus in his sermons to the faithful, frequently discoursed on these touching mysteries. Full of tender love for our Blessed Lady, he never omitted to publish her praises and endeavoured by every means to propagate devotion to her. He taught the faithful several suitable practices to enable them to grow in devotion to the Holy Mother of God, and draw down upon themselves her powerful protection. The devotion he recommended most particularly was the recitation of the Crown of the Seven Joys of our Blessed Lady. But Blessed Ladislaus did not limit his zeal to apostolic labours. He also rendered great services to the Order, by filling the office of Provincial of the Polish Observance five times, and causing religious discipline to flourish in this Province. Guided by the experience of a long government, he drew up the Provincial Statutes, which were approved by the Chapter held at Cracow. These wise rules contributed to maintain the purity and vigour of the Rule in his Province. Finally he sent a great number of missionaries to Lithuania and to Russia, to convert infidels and schismatics. These evangelical labours gathered abundant harvests in these provinces. The missionaries were received favourably by Alexander

Zagellon, grandson of the Zagellon formerly governor of this Province. This prince was brother to John Albert, King of Poland, whom he succeeded in 1501. Since then the Friars Minor of the Observance have resided in Lithuania. In 1504, the Provincial Chapter assembled at Cracow. Blessed Ladislaus then finished his fifth triennial as Provincial, he was broken by age and austerities and the fatigues of a long and laborious apostolate. Full of respect for his merits and gratitude for all the services he had rendered to religion and the Order, the Fathers of the Chapter refused to assign him a residence and asked him to choose for himself where he would wish to reside.

"My Fathers," said the holy old man, "do you really wish that I should live according to my own fancy and will? Do you forget that I have pledged myself to observe the vow of obedience until death? Far be it from me that I should exercise my own will, my only desire is to fulfil the commands of my superiors. I wish always to acquiesce in their judgment, and follow without hesitation whatever they may consider right to settle for me. May I never follow my own will. It belongs to my superiors to dispose of the time that yet remains to me of life. I leave it entirely to them. These words deeply affected the Fathers of the Chapter. He was appointed Guardian of the convent at Warsaw, where in the following year he finished his course. On Good Friday 1505, Blessed Ladislaus preached the sermon on the Passion, at Warsaw. All at once his countenance was transfigured. He fell into an ecstacy and was raised in the air in the presence of the people. When he came down from the pulpit, he was seized with a fever, and about a month later, the fourth of May 1505, he slept in the Lord. Many miracles were performed at his tomb, which was placed in the church of the Observance of Warsaw, and the Poles as well as the Lithuanians look upon him as one of their principal patrons. Benedict XIV. sanctioned devotion to him. (His feast is kept on this day throughout the Order.)

October 23.

St. John Capistran, disciple of St. Bernardine of Siena, apostle of Italy and Germany.

[1385—1456.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor of the Observance.

John Capistran, one of the greatest glories of the Seraphic Order, was in the fifteenth century the most powerful support of the Papacy, by his heroic labours, his great zeal, and his sublime devotion. He was above all a great worker of miracles and a marvel of holiness.[1]

This great apostle was born on the twenty-fourth of June, 1385, in the little town of Capistrano, not far from Aquila, in the Kingdom of Naples. His father, a French nobleman, probably from Anjou, had followed Louis of Anjou in his expedition to conquer the kingdom of Naples, and having

[1] The life of St. John Capistran is given by all the annalists and the biographers of the Seraphic Order. Wadding mentions him in the IX., X., XI., XII., and XIII., Volumes of his Annals. The life of the Saint was written, in 1677, by Bernard Massoni of Aquila, by John Baptist Barberi (Rome 1690), by Father Amand Hermann, ex-Provincial of the Friars of the Observance in Bohemia: *Capistranus triumphans*, and by many other writers. The Bollandists have reproduced three lives written by the Saint's disciples, Father Nicholas of Fara, Father Christopher of Varese, Father Jerome of Udine, who were the companions of his wonderful apostolate in Germany, and eye-witnesses of all they relate. The manuscripts of these three biographers are kept in the convent of Ara Cœli. We have followed the three contemporaneous biographers, and Bernard Massoni of Aquila.

married a lady of great piety at Capistrano, he settled in this town. At an early age John showed signs of the rare qualities which were to make him one of the greatest men of his day. Deprived when still young of a father's care, he found in the faith and good sense of his mother the counsels and guidance of which he stood in need to pass safely through the perils of early youth. His elementary education took place under her eyes, his masters conceived the greatest hopes of his future success, and he was sent to Perugia where he remained for ten years studying civil and canon law with the most brilliant results. During this long course of study he had given proof of so much talent and sound judgment that he was looked upon as the prince of lawyers. His masters themselves were not ashamed of asking his advice on the most knotty questions.[2] Among his clients was Ladislaus, King of Naples, who honoured him with his patronage and, about the year 1412, made him governor of the town of Perugia, where he had acquired all his science.[3] John, who was then twenty-seven showed himself quite equal to the trust. He was a friend to the poor, a protector to the lower classes, a severe master to men of vicious life, an upright judge to all ranks of society and incapable of making a compromise with any sort of injustice. Gifts and prayers were unavailing, and nothing could intimidate him.

Once, a nobleman of the country offered him a large sum of money as a bribe if he would condemn to death an enemy of his, while he threatened to stab him if he did not yield to his demands. The young governor, indignant at the man's pretensions, carefully examined into the case, discovered the innocence of the accused and set him free, without troubling

[2] Nicholas of Fara, chap. 1. Jerome of Udine, chap. 1.

[3] Perugia belonged to the Holy See, but John XXIII. had given this town as well as some others belonging to the Pope's dominions to King Ladislaus, as security for a sum of money which he owed him.

himself about the threats of which he might himself become the victim.[4]

Very soon the entire province enjoyed a security which was rare in those days. Crimes diminished, the roads were safe, property and the lives of citizens were respected, and brigandage vanished. Everyone was at peace under the guardianship of the fearless and incorruptible governor. His zeal, prudence, and wisdom, rendered him daily more dear to the king his master. One of the richest gentlemen of Perugia offered him his only daughter in marriage and John accepted his proposal. Earthly happiness smiled on him, fortune and honours were his and had made him in a short time one of the favoured ones of this world. John, it is true, feared God, and made His commandments the first rule of his conduct, his heart, nevertheless, was not proof against ambition, he aspired to glory and worked to gain it. But God, Who had higher aims for this chosen soul, suddenly put a stop to his prosperity, and scattered in a moment his hopes of fortune. He made of him a Christian hero, an apostle, a Saint.

It was in the year 1416, king Ladislaus had died two years previously, and John Capistran represented, at Perugia, Joan II. who had succeeded this prince on the throne of Naples. "While I was at Perugia," said our Saint, "war broke out between the citizens of the town and the Malatesta (lords of Rimini). I was deputed to bring about peace. I was seized by treachery, shut up in a tower, bound with chains on my feet weighing forty-two pounds, and for food I was only given a little bread and water. In this great misfortune I thought of what means I could take to escape death, and I calculated the height of the tower. I had a sash which I tore into strips and to these I added the fragments of my hood.[5] Having firmly fixed this cord to the

[4] Wadding, Vol. IX., p. 68.

[5] The hood was the badge of a doctor's degree, and worn by magistrates, it consisted of a band of stuff which fell from the left shoulder.

outside wall, I began to get down as well as I could, but the strips giving way, I fell to the ground and crushed my foot. The noise of chains attracted the attention of the guards who took me up and cast me into an underground dungeon. I was knee deep in water and an iron chain round my waist held me to the wall and forced me to be always standing." [6]

During the time of this painful captivity, John began to reflect on the instability and nothingness of earthly hopes. Nevertheless he dared not come to a definite resolution, and a great struggle took place in his soul until Divine grace came to help his weakness and scatter his doubts. One day when he had fallen asleep, worn out with fatigue, he was awakened by a great noise, the tower was illuminated with heavenly light and in its midst stood a Friar Minor with the Sacred Stigmata, and said, "Why this faltering, why this delay, proud man? Obey the commands of God, and listen to the voice which He makes you to hear interiorly." "What does the Lord ask of me," said John, "what would He have me to do?" It was answered to him. "Do not you understand what the Lord wants of you? Do you not see what habit I wear? Forsake the world whose deceptions you have experienced, clothe yourself in this habit so that you may sanctify your soul in the religious life." John, whose heart was filled with sadness, replied. "It is a hard thing to live in the cloister and to give up for ever one's freedom. I have never thought of embracing such a life, but since God wills it, I will obey." After this vision of St. Francis, he slept a little, and when he awoke he found his hair cut in the form of a crown as the Friars Minor wear it. From that time our Saint resolved to serve no master but God. His resolution was made, never to be broken.[7]

[6] *Memoir of James of Franchis*, quoted by Massoni of Aquila.

[7] John Baptist Barberi (p. 7.) and the other biographers. Father Christopher, his disciple, relates that after the miraculous cutting of his hair in the form of a crown, it never grew again but the crown remained all his life in memory of this miracle.

John Capistran thought of nothing but of obeying the commands of God, he managed to regain his liberty at the price of a large ransom. He sold his goods, paid his debt, returned her dower to his wife,[8] and distributing what remained to him among Christ's poor, he went to the convent of the Friars of the Observance *Del Monte* near Perugia, the town which had witnessed both his power and his humiliation. Blessed Mark of Bergamo, Superior of the community, a man famed for great sanctity and miraculous powers, wished to try the vocation of the new postulant. "I do not believe so readily," he said, "in a call from God. You must know that convents are not a refuge for vagabonds and for those who are weary of the world. Many other proofs of vocation are required before entering a religious Order, so I will not admit you till you have bade a solemn farewell to the world and to all earthly vanities." John listened humbly to these words, and declared that he was ready to forsake the world by treading under foot all human respect, and by braving every insult and ill-treatment in the very town where he had formerly received every honour.

On his return to Perugia he went through the streets of the town mounted backwards on an ass, clothed in rags and wearing a cardboard mitre, on which were written in large letters all the sins of his life. Thus this man who had gained such a high reputation for wisdom, prudence and discretion, became the laughing stock of the whole town. Children ran after him pelting him with stones. People looked upon him

[8] Some biographers think that John Capistran was only betrothed, but according to contemporary biographers it seems certain that the marriage had been celebrated but not consummated, so that the tie once broken by the religious profession of the Saint, his wife could validly marry again. It is likewise implied by the words of the Saint, quoted in the Memoir of James of Franchis, that his marriage had just taken place when the sedition arose which led to his imprisonment. (See the Bollandists, Vol. X., October, pp. 277, 278.)

as a madman, and hooted, insulted and scoffed at him.[9] By this unexampled act of humility, John Capistran gained a complete victory over the world and himself. Based on such a foundation, is it to be wondered at that his religious life should have risen to such a sublime height of perfection? Yet a few years, and this same man, so humble and self-forgetful, travelled not only through towns but through whole provinces and countries, miracles marking every step. God was pleased to exalt him, and people crowded to meet him singing hymns and canticles, while the humble follower of St. Francis exclaimed, "To Thee, O Lord, to Thee, be all honour and glory."

On the fourth of October, in the year 1416,[10] at the age of about thirty, John was clothed in the habit of the Seraphic Order, at the convent of Perugia, and he was placed under the direction of Onuphrius of Seggiano, a simple lay brother, but a religious of rare prudence and of great holiness. From the first day of his entrance into religion, John Capistran worked courageously to put off the old man and to clothe himself with the new. He was faithful to the smallest observances of religion, diligent in prayer, full of zeal and charity for the sick, he practised the most rigorous austerities, and gave an example of blind and steadfast obedience. One of his biographers tells us that he generally took the great mysteries of the Passion of our Lord for the subject of his meditation, and that it was accompanied by many sighs and tears. He was also most devout to the Mother of God,

[9] Some biographers think, with Nicholas of Fara, that this public penance was imposed by Blessed Mark of Bergamo.

[10] Wadding, with some other biographers, date the entry of the Saint into the Franciscan Order from the year 1414; but in the Memoirs of James of Franchis, John Capistran expressly says that his imprisonment took place in 1416 and that he was then about thirty years of age; the Chronicle of Gubbio says that this sedition took place at Perugia during the first half of the year 1416. On the other hand, in a letter to Blessed Mark of Bergamo, in 1455, our Saint reminds him that he had entered the Order on the feast of St. Francis.

saluting her often with the Angel Gabriel, knowing well that the palm of victory is not to be won without the help of this glorious Virgin.[11]

During the year of noviceship, God allowed His faithful servant to be tried like gold in the furnace, and he was exercised by humiliations proportionate to the great designs which He had for him. Father Christopher of Varese, a disciple and biographer of our Saint, tells us of these trials, and other contemporary writers also make mention of them. "By the little which I shall relate," he says, "it will be seen how admirable were his patience and his humility. Although in the world he had enjoyed a great reputation for learning, prudence, and acuteness, the Superior, whose custom it is to try all those who enter religion, without respect to persons, put him under the direction of a brother of great austerity and holiness of life, in order that he should be made humble. The brother neglected no means of instructing his disciple in religious observances, and of exercising him in obedience and humility. Each day there were fresh rebukes and new penances imposed, sometimes it was disciplines, at others a fast on bread and water, or he was to take his meals kneeling, while his brethren were seated at table. Once when the servant of God was suffering from a violent attack of fever, his master brought him a boiling infusion and bade him drink it. The humble novice trusting to holy obedience, swallowed it without a moment's hesitation, and, wonderful to relate, the scalding draught, instead of hurting him, immediately cured the fever.

"Another time, the novices who were about to wash the tunics, according to custom, stood round the tub and dared not begin their work as the water in which the tunics were soaking was still boiling. Meanwhile, Brother Onuphrius, the novice master, came up and, without saying a word to the others, he severely rebuked John Capistran, calling him idle, sleepy, and negligent. Then, taking a tunic out of the

[11] Christopher of Varese, chap. 1. *Apud Boll.*

boiling water, he threw it in his face. The Saint feeling that he was scalded, humbly knelt before his superior, and God, in reward for his humility and patience, allowed no trace of the scalding to appear on his face. All the other trials to which the servant of God was subjected, foreboded the great holiness to which he was one day to attain. In after times John Capistran, speaking of Brother Onuphrius, his old novice master, said, 'I return thanks to Almighty God Who deigned to give me such a master, for if he had not treated me so strictly, I should never have gained the virtues of humility or patience.' Such were the piles of gold, such the marble pillars on which our father afterwards raised such a beautiful edifice of perfection."[12] The Minister General, Antony Pireto, having visited the convent at Perugia and seen the Saint in private, could not help saying, "If this young man perseveres he will one day be the glory of our Order and the mirror of the Christian people."[13]

Our Saint had been given the office of sacristan, and one night," says Nicholas of Fara, "as he was in the sacristy taking the discipline and reciting the Penitential Psalms, the devil appeared to him under a hideous form trying to turn him from this exercise of penance. The soldier of Christ said to him quite undisturbed, 'Thou canst do nothing against me, if God does not allow it, and whatever thou dost by His Will, I shall bear without murmuring.' He went on taking the discipline and continued his prayer and the devil fled ignominiously."[14]

It was amid such exercises that he spent his year of probation. As soon as the time of profession was come, says

[12] Christopher of Varese, chap. 1. *Apud Boll.* Another companion of our Saint relates that once his master bade him take a cloth from a copper which was on the fire. The novice turned up his sleeve and plunged his arm without hesitation into the boiling water and drew out the cloth without being hurt at all. (Jerome of Udine, chap. 3.).

[13] Christopher of Varese, chap. 2. *Apud Boll.*

[14] Nicholas of Fara, chap. 1. *Apud Boll.*

Father Christopher of Varese, the servant of God kneeling before the community, humbly begged of the Religious to admit him to profession, at the same time acknowledging his unworthiness of so great a favour, and that being so great a sinner he did not deserve to come among the servants of God. The brethren, knowing his deep humility, his love of prayer, and his wonderful talents, joyfully gave him their votes. After his profession, he only grew more humble, more devout and more fervent. He was a true imitator of Francis, Antony, and Bonaventure, and was often to be seen sweeping the convent, washing the dishes, waiting on the friars, and filling all the other lowly offices.

St. John Capistran was professed on the fifth of October, 1417, and then began to study theology with St. James della Marca who had made his vows a few months before. St. Bernardine of Siena was appointed for some time to initiate them into the mysteries of sacred science. He was their first professor in the convent at Fiesole and the disciples were worthy of their master. Thus was formed the close and holy friendship which knit together the three pillars of the Observance, the three great champions of the Church in the fifteenth century. St. John Capistran made such astonishing progress in theological study in so short a time, that St. Bernardine said, "John learns while sleeping what others could only do by working day and night." He appeared to have received the gift of infused science, in fact, historians tell us that under the form of a silver cup, from which our Lady gave her devoted servant to drink, he obtained the understanding of Holy Scripture.[15] Thus his doctrine was truly wonderful and heavenly. St. John Capistran was a profound theologian and a learned canonist,[16] he

[15] Christopher of Varese, chap. 6.

[16] St. John Capistran has left a great number of writings, some of them unpublished: Treatises on the Election of the Pope against the Council of Bale, on the Dignity of the Church, on the Authority of the Pope and of the Council, on Religion, on the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, on

was in truth the greatest missionary of his day, the one whose words exercised the greatest power over the people.

About the year 1418, St. Bernardine who till then had only preached in Tuscany, extended his apostolic work to all the towns and provinces of Italy. John Capistran wished to hear a master so famous for his talents and virtue, and to study his method of preaching the Word of God. He spent a year in his school, as attentive as the most lowly disciple to profit by his least instructions. He witnessed his success among the people, he saw him grapple with vice and with the evils with which Italy was laid desolate, always victorious but always humble, always a man of prayer and of penance, reckoning more on Divine grace to surmount obstacles than on his own eloquence and the resources of his mind. John Capistran, who had himself reached the summit of virtue, understood the secret of this wonderful success. He made it the rule of his conduct, even more, he equalled his master, if he did not surpass him, by his truly prodigious labours and his wonderful works.

It was about the year 1420 that St. John Capistran first began to preach, he was then only a deacon. St. Bernardine had sent him to his beloved town of Siena to evangelize it, thence he went to some other places in Tuscany. The fruits which he then gathered were a good omen of what his apostolic work would one day be. After these first preachings, his superiors had him raised to the priesthood and thus the sacerdotal consecration invested John Capistran with power from on High.

Cases Reserved to the Pope, on Usury, Contracts, Blasphemy, Restitution, Confession, Marriage, Anti-Christ, Hell, Purgatory, the Immaculate Conception, against the Hussites, against the Jews, a Defence of the Third Order of St. Francis, Sermons, numberless Letters to Popes, to princes, to bishops, etc. Pope Pius II. calls St. John Capistran a renowned theologian. "St. John Capistran," says Cardinal Bellarmine, "shed a lustre by his doctrine on the Holy Catholic Church." And again Mark of Lisbon: "No one was more learned than he in ecclesiastical and civil law, no one more ardent or powerful in withstanding heretics."

He began his apostolic life about the year 1425. From this time, there was no longer any rest for him, he journeyed as an apostle through provinces and countries, he, as it were, multiplied himself with the rapidity of lightning that he might gain souls for God. He confronted every error, attacked every sect, brought back, by hundreds of thousands sinners who had gone astray, Jews, heretics, schismatics, and silenced others by the holiness of his life, by the power of his preaching, and the lustre of his miracles. He brought about the reform and the increase of his religious Order. He stopped hordes of Mussulman ready to invade Europe, and he averted many dangers which threatened the Church. The eyes of Christendom were turned on John Capistran. Popes, bishops, princes, and people considered him to be one of those extraordinary men sent by God for the saving of nations and the triumph of the Faith. He looked upon himself, however, as an unprofitable servant, the love of the Cross filled his heart, his sole ambition was the victory of the Cross over the world.

At the beginning of the fifteenth century, the Church was emerging from one of the most dangerous crises in her history. The same Divine hand which had laid her foundations had not ceased to sustain her during the storm. In 1417, by the Council of Constance, peace was restored by putting an end to that long schism which for nearly forty years had rent the bosom of the immortal Spouse of Christ. The schism of the West was at an end, but what havoc it had made! The vineyard of the Lord was let to lie waste, ecclesiastical discipline was neglected, the people were plunged in indifference and torn by division and discord, heresies swarmed on all sides. To heal the many evils under which Christianity was labouring, God, in His Providence, sent men such as St. Bernardine of Siena, St. John Capistran, St. James della Marca, and a host of apostolic men belonging to the Franciscan family of the Observance. These great reformers moved the world by their preaching,

comforted the Church, by bringing back to her bosom innumerable heretics and schismatics, and by awakening from the sleep of death, multitudes of sinners.

John Capistran appears before us as one of the mos valiant of this band of heroic men. To give an idea of his prodigious apostolic labours, we will quote the testimony of contemporary biographers who were eye-witnesses of them. Father Christopher of Varese speaks thus, "When the time appointed by God had come to send him to work in His vineyard, the servant of God left his solitude like a roaring lion and like a heavenly trumpet, going from province to province, preaching to the people and showing them their sins, according to the words of the prophet, and teaching them, in compliance with Holy Writ, to fly from vice and practise virtue. . . . The words of this man, invested with power from on High, were listened to; all people desired to hear him. Happy was the city that possessed him within its walls. Some towns appealed to the Pope, others to the Cardinal Protector of the Order, to get leave for him to come and preach in their midst. The throng that came to hear him was so great that the churches and the public places were not large enough to contain it. The number of persons present at his sermons was reckoned at fifty thousand, eighty thousand, a hundred thousand, and even sometimes as many as a hundred and fifty thousand. If I wished to relate the abundant fruit which he gathered in all Christian nations, in Italy, in France, in Germany, in Poland, in Hungary, in Bohemia, I should be obliged to declare that I was powerless.[17]

Another of his disciples, Father Nicholas of Fara, also speaks of the wonderful works of the Franciscan apostle. "No one," he says, "was more jealous than John Capistran for the conversion of heretics, schismatics, and Jews. No one was more anxious that religion should flourish, or had more

[17] Life of the Saint by Father Christopher of Varese, his disciple, chap. 2. *Apud Boll.*

power in working wonders, no one was so ardently desirous of martyrdom, no one was more illustrious by the fame of his holiness. And so he was welcomed with honour in all the provinces of Italy. The throng of people at his sermons was so great that it might be thought that the apostolic times were revived. On his arrival in a province, the towns and villages were in commotion and flocked in crowds to hear him. The towns invited him to visit them either by pressing letters, or by deputations, or by an appeal to the Sovereign Pontiff through the medium of influential persons. He preached to all the kingdom of God, not with words of human wisdom, but with the virtue of the Holy Ghost, and God confirmed his mission by wonders. The fame of his sanctity had made him celebrated among all the people of Italy. The inhabitants of Aquila, Siena, Arezzo, Florence, Venice, Padua, Treviso, Vicenza, Verona, Milan, Brescia, Mantua, and Udine, venerated and loved him beyond all that can be imagined. The people of these towns, as well as those of Sicily, were so anxious to see him and so eager to hear him, that those who attended his sermons filled the public places and often an extensive plain, for at his preachings twenty thousand sometimes forty thousand, and on some occasions even more than a hundred thousand persons were present. The devotion for the servant of God was so great that often he could not go from one place to another on account of the crowds that surrounded him to cut pieces off his garments.[18]

Christopher of Soldo, a citizen of Brescia, speaks, in his Memoirs, of a mission given in this town by our Saint. He takes care to mention that he was an eye-witness of what he relates. "On the ninth of February, 1451," he says, "a friar of the Observance of St. Francis, named John Capistran, came to our town. Three hundred gentlemen of the highest families went out on horseback to meet

[18] Life of the Saint, by Nicholas of Fara, his companion and disciple, chap. 4. *Apud Boll.*

him, women followed on foot, he entered by the gate of Saint Euphemia. When he was at St. Saviour's, the crowd of horsemen and pedestrians was so great that it might have been taken to be a large army. It was no marvel that high and low, the chiefs of the city as well as the people, should have come out to meet this friar, for he had been preceded by the fame of the wonders which he had wrought in Padua, in Vicenza, in Verona, and even in the city of Rome itself, so that he was looked upon as a herald of the Divine word, as a saint, a wonder-worker who healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, health to the paralysed, and raised the dead to life. On account of his great fame, the whole province hurried to Brescia, and our magistrates were obliged to get in a large quantity of provisions for the time the man of God sojourned in this town.

"A pulpit was erected in the public square, and on Wednesday, the tenth of February, three hours before sunrise, more than ten thousand men were already gathered together to hear the man of God, from which it may be judged what a vast crowd would collect in the day. Our magistrates, followed by a crowd of people, led him to the market-place. Fifty gentlemen, four of whom were knights with golden spurs, acted as ushers and guarded him from the crowd; for every one wanted to touch him or take a piece of his garments, as if he had been St. Peter. It was with difficulty that day that he was able to get to the pulpit. When the sermon was ended, he was conducted to the great hospital, where a lodging had been prepared for him, but he would not stay anywhere except in the convent of his Order.

The next day, he would not preach in the public square which had become too small for the multitude of his hearers, the pulpit was taken to the new emporium—a vast plain—and here he preached on the Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. During these three days, such an immense number of people came that every one was surprised, and

the sick brought to the man of God amounted to two thousand. Each day he was occupied in healing them, making the sign of the Cross over them and invoking St. Bernardine of Siena, whose skull-cap he held in his hand, and by the grace of Jesus Christ and the holiness of John Capistran, His servant, miracles were wrought. He then announced that on the following Sunday he would expose the skull-cap of St. Bernardine to the veneration of the faithful. Either on account of this relic, or on account of the fame of his miracles—for wonderful things were related far and wide, which were perfectly true—on that day there was such a concourse of people that, from the territory of Brescia—four men out of five came to this town. Many came also from Bergamo, from Geradabba, from Lodi, from Crema, from Cremona, from Mantua, and even from Germany. This immense multitude filled not only the emporium but all the places from which the preacher could be seen, so that the man of God could never have reached the pulpit, if the magistrates and the chief citizens had not conducted him to it. Near to the pulpit was a raised platform reserved for the magistrates and the principal persons of Brescia. As soon as he had mounted the pulpit, the preacher was astounded at the sight of such a multitude. . . . . I was present at his sermon. I thought I had chosen a safe and convenient place, but the crowd became so dense that if some of my friends had not raised me in their arms and passed me along over the heads of the crowd I should certainly have been suffocated. Nor was I the only one in this danger, many others were well nigh killed. . . . After the sermon, he gave the habit of St. Francis to fifty soldiers whom he had converted at Verona. . . The following Tuesday he left, before sunrise, to go to Mantua and thence to Venice where he was to preach during Lent."[19]

Father Nicholas of Fara, a companion of the Saint and

[19] Extract from the Memoirs of Christopher of Soldo, reprinted by Muratori, Vol. XXI.

eye-witness of this same preaching, rated the number of persons who attended it at a hundred and twenty-six thousand. "At Brescia," he says, "there was gathered such a multitude of people that the servant of God was obliged to preach in a vast plain, near to the gate of St. Apollonia, and we saw with our own eyes that on one day there were certainly a hundred and twenty-six thousand men, who not only came from Brescia, but from the provinces of Cremona, of Bergamo, and of Milan. All could not hear his voice but it was enough for them to see the man of God, or to touch him. Many climbed the trees that they might get a sight of the preacher, and when the branches broke under their weight, they fell without sustaining the least hurt. The inhabitants of Vicenza, of Verona, of Treviso, of Padua, and of Mantua, displayed the same veneration for the servant of God at this time, and he wrought many miracles in their behalf. The Florentines also were so full of veneration for this friend of the Most High that he could not appear in their streets without being accompanied with a numerous escort of armed men, so desirous was the multitude to kiss or to touch his garments. John Capistran, this vessel of humility, always sought to escape from these honours and from the enthusiasm of the people. He would often get away by night, and when he could neither prevent these marks of veneration nor fly from them, he would frequently repeat the words of the Psalmist, "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Thy Name give the glory."[20]

Such was John Capistran whose prodigious works brought back the memory of the days of the Apostles. Nicholas of Fara calls him "Another Paul, repelling by the sword of his preaching the enemies of sound doctrine, bearing the triumphal Name of Jesus before kings, princes, and nations, bringing back to Christ, the true Shepherd, an innumerable multitude of heretics, of schismatics, of Jews, and of sinners.

[20] Nicholas of Fara, chap. 4.

Happy," he says, "was he who was able to see with his own eyes such a man. He was like a star in the midst of a cloud. He shone first like a sun in the Italian sky, thence to shed its beams on Germany, on Bohemia, on Poland, and on Hungary. He taught to the people the kingdom of God, he healed the sick, chased away devils by the power of God with which he was invested. He was the glittering star of our age, the glory of the Friars Minor, the honour of Italy, the might of Hungary, the terror of the Turks, the invincible champion and bulwark of Christianity.[21]

The apostolic life of St. John Capistran includes his labours in Italy from 1425 to 1451, then his missions in Germany, from 1451 till his happy death which took place in 1456.

Popes Martin V., Eugenius IV., Nicholas V., and Calixtus III., often had recourse to the devotedness and great abilities of our Saint, for the general interests of Holy Church. He fulfilled the duties of Apostolic Nuncio, of Legate *a latere*, and of Grand Inquisitor for the whole world. He worked with unwearied spirit to root out the two great heresies of his day, namely that of the Fratricelli in Italy and that of the Hussites in Germany.

By means of the great schism of the West, the Fratricelli had increased in Italy and had everywhere spread their detestable doctrines, they had over-run the provinces of Tuscany, of the Marches, of Calabria, drawing to themselves a multitude of adventurers, frightening the people by their boldness and scandalising them by their disorderly lives. Pope Martin V., resolving to put a stop to their excesses, chose in 1426, St. John Capistran and St. James della Marca, to fight against these sectarians who had become a real scourge to religion and to society. He gave them ample powers and made them understand all that the Church expected, in this grave matter, from their prudence, solicitude, and zeal for religion. The Pope judged rightly of the

[21] *Ibid* Prologue and chap. 4.

fitness of these two men for this duty. They gave themselves up with incredible zeal to the work which was so important for the welfare of souls as well as the good of society. By their eloquence, their gentle charity, and their courage, which rose superior to every danger, they brought back the greater number of these unfortunate sectarians to the fold of Christ.

But error, kept down for a time, soon rose up again more tenacious and more threatening than ever. Quenched in one country, it re-appeared in another, and it was ever needful to be on the alert to keep it from producing its unhappy results. Eugenius IV., in 1432, and Nicholas V., in 1447, again charged John Capistran to meet the dangers with which the Church was threatened. Always ready to go where obedience called him, our Saint resumed the laborious ministry of the conversion of heretics. He knew well how to blend gentleness with strength, tender charity with the arguments of reason and of wisdom. He pursued heresy, without being stopped by fatigue or danger, until he had thoroughly uprooted it. His zeal drew upon him the fury of his enemies. The sectarians laid snares for him and tried many times to take his life, but the Hand of God shielded him from their malice. One day, while walking in the country, he withdrew from his companions to pray, some heretics seeing him alone but not knowing who he was, drew near and angrily asked of him where Brother John Capistran was. The Saint understood the danger, but trusting in God and being more willing to die than to tell a lie, he answered in a firm voice, "I am John Capistran." At these words, the sectarians were seized with sudden terror and did him no harm.[22]

Like Bernardine, his master, John Capistran trusted in all his undertakings to the Name of Jesus, Whose praises he never ceased to recount. It was the standard of peace to him amid dissension, the torch which was to scatter the

[22] Christopher of Varese, chap. 2.

darkness of error and to bring back the wanderers to the right path. In 1427, our Saint was called to Naples by Queen Joan II. While preaching in this town, he heard that St. Bernardine was exposed to violent persecution on account of the devotion to the Name of Jesus, and that he was cited, at the instigation of his enemies, before Pope Martin V. On hearing this, he stopped his course of sermons to hasten to the defence of his dear and illustrious master. When he arrived at the gates of Rome, he caused a banner on which was engraved the Holy Name, to be unfurled, he then went to the palace of the Sovereign Pontiff, accompanied by an immense crowd of Roman citizens and strangers singing hymns in honour of the Sacred Name of Jesus. On the day fixed for the public discussion, the two Saints pleaded the cause of this Holy Name with such strength of argument and with such great proofs of doctrine that the assembly was in admiration and the foes of St. Bernardine were put to shame. The Sovereign Pontiff declared Bernardine not only innocent of all suspicion of heresy, but a man faithful in doctrine and in work, and an obedient son of Holy Church. He then commanded that a public procession should go through the streets of Rome in honour of this adorable Name. In its midst, John Capistran bore a banner on which was printed, "Blessed, praised, and exalted be the Name of Jesus to-day."[23]

In the year 1431, Martin V. died, after a pontificate devoted to healing the wounds caused to the Church by a long schism. Our Saint had assisted him in his last illness, and he knew by a sign from Heaven that the Pope's death was drawing near.[24] About a month after, Eugenius IV. was elected by the unanimous votes of the cardinals. John Capistran, to whom he was already knit in a close bond of friendship, had foretold to him some months before that he would be the chosen Pope. One day when he came to visit

[23] See the Life of St. Bernardine (twentieth of May, p. 258) for details of this event. [24] Christopher of Varese, chap. 6.

the cardinal, instead of kissing his hand on taking leave, as was the custom, he threw himself at his feet and kissed them. The cardinal wishing to know the motive of this extraordinary mark of respect, the Saint replied that he paid him honour for the last time as the Archbishop of Siena, for very soon he would be made Pope.[25] Eugenius IV. particularly loved St. Bernardine, St. John Capistran, St. James della Marca, and their disciples, and he sought their aid, as Martin V. had done, in the most important affairs of the Church.

About the year 1437, the disciples of St. John Colombini, known under the name of Jesuates, were greatly calumniated, they were accused of errors and of giving scandal. Eugenius IV. named St. Laurence Justinian to examine into the matter, and he appointed St. John Capistran to help him. "A man," he said in his Bull, "illustrious for the holiness of his life, the integrity of his fame, his cleverness in learning and doctrine." It would have been difficult to find two men who were more fit to conduct the examination and to bring about the triumph of justice. These good religious found a defender of their cause in Blessed John Tossignano, Bishop of Ferrara, and a member of their Order. This great servant of God having written to bear witness in favour of his former brethren, the examination of the legates confirmed his deposition, and St. Laurence in his own name, as well as in that of John Capistran, attested to the whole Catholic world, the innocence of the persecuted religious.

This was a most critical period. The Council of Bâle, transformed into a schismatic assembly, had elected a prince of Savoy as Sovereign Pontiff. Thus the Church, threatened with new divisions, was obliged to appeal to the zeal of her most devoted sons. At this grave moment, the Friars Minor of the Observance gave wonderful proof of their devotion. They were to be found everywhere. At the Council begun at Ferrara and continued at Florence, in Greece, in Armenia,

[25] *Ibid.*

in Ethiopia, striving to bring back the schismatics to union with the Church, in all the towns of Italy, striving to keep the faithful at peace, and to combat the pretended Council and the false Pope who had been elected at Bâle. About the year 1439, John Capistran was sent to the East as Visitor to the Franciscan convents in the Holy Land. In concert with Blessed James Primadizzi, he worked to bring back the Armenians to the Church, and he returned to Italy with their representatives. The Council had then been transferred to Florence.

While this assembly, guided by the Roman Pontiff, was occupied with persevering zeal for the sacred interests of Faith, the schismatical Council of Bâle was plunging deeper and deeper into rebellion and saddening truly Catholic hearts. Among its upholders, was Charles VII. King of France and some other princes. John Capistran wrote to oppose the man whom the schismatics of Bâle elected as Pope, with the name of Felix V. He defended, with equal intelligence and courage, Eugenius IV., the lawful and unquestionable Head of the whole Church. Then, being sent by the Sovereign Pontiff as legate to the Milanese and to Burgundy, he set out for Milan towards the year 1440. Duke Philip Mary Visconti had formerly been personally opposed to Eugenius IV., he was besides son-in-law to Amadeus of Savoy, the Antipope of Bâle, and there was everything to fear from a prince whose political interests were the guide of his faith. Capistran, strong in the help of God and in his love for Holy Church, went fearlessly to Milan and appeared before the prince, he spoke with the knowledge of a man versed in matters of business, and with the nobleness and courage of an apostle. His powerful and persuasive words made an impression on the heart of Visconti and drew him over to the cause of Rome.

From Milan, John Capistran went to Burgundy where Philip the Good was reigning. Here he was received, not only as the ambassador of an earthly monarch, but as an

angel from Heaven. Preceded by the fame of his holiness, the people hastened to see and hear him. The duchess thought it an honour to present her son, yet a little child, to him and to beg of him to bless the boy. In vain did the partisans of the antipope bestir themselves, in vain did they lay snares for the Saint seeking his death, the Hand of God sheltered him from peril and he returned in triumph to Florence. His efforts had everywhere been crowned with brilliant success.

After the Council of Florence, Eugenius IV. sent our Saint as Apostolic Nuncio to Sicily. On his way to this country, John Capistran stopped at the convent on lake Trasimeno. Here he met St. Bernardine of Siena and St. James della Marca, who was Guardian of this community. It was the last time that these three great servants of God were to meet on earth. Their conversation was of heavenly things and of the interests of holy Church.[26] Capistran continued his journey to Palermo where King Alfonso dwelt. When news came of his arrival, the grandees of the Court, followed by an immense crowd of people, went to meet him. They wanted to take him to the apartments which had been got ready for him in the royal palace, but the humble religious excused himself as he wished to lodge in the convent of his Order. There, notwithstanding the dignity of Nuncio with which he was invested, he would allow no distinction to be made for him, and he loved to perform the most humble duties in the community, as if he had been the lowest among the brethren. He was working with his usual zeal and success in this populous city, when sorrowful news called him elsewhere. Bernardine, his well-beloved master and father, had just died at Aquila, and already the fame of his miracles was spreading through the country. Thus did God glorify in an extraordinary way the apostle of Italy, the great peacemaker of the provinces and cities. When

[26] *Vita dell' Apostolico eroe, Giacomo della Marca, opera del R. P. Giuseppe Arcangelo*, p. 153. Napoli, 1851.

John heard of St. Bernardine's death, he said to those who were around him, "I have lost a father, but I have gained a protector."

He hastened to leave Sicily, that he might witness the wonderful things of which he heard daily, examine into them, and collect evidence to submit to the judgment of the Holy See, so as to obtain the canonization of his blessed Father Bernardine. On his arrival at Aquila, his first care was to kneel at the tomb of his venerated master, there shedding many tears. "I salute you, O my Father," he cried, "behold you are now in the possession of the treasure of eternal glory."[27] St. John Capistran then busied himself with what was the principal object of his journey, namely, the glorification of Bernardine.

God soon showed him by a wonderful sign how pleasing to Him were these proceedings. Capistran was preaching at Aquila, in the public square, on the glories of Mary, and he was explaining the text of the Apocalypse, which had been some years before expounded by Bernardine in this same square. Suddenly a splendid star appeared above his head. The crowd, heedful only of the wonderful phenomenon, paid no more attention to the preacher's words, and amid much sensation, a murmur ran through the assembly. The Saint asked the cause of this disturbance, and the people cried in answer, "Behold! it is the star which formerly illuminated Bernardine with its rays."[28] Struck by this marvel of Divine goodness, John returned thanks to God and from that hour conceived a steadfast hope of the success of his undertaking. The next day he set out, with his companions, on his journey to Rome, and again the star appeared, like the one that led the Magi to Bethlehem, to

[27] *Vita di S. Giovanni da Capistrano pel sacerdote Rotelli*, p. 99, Monza, 1878.

[28] Life of St. Bernardine of Siena, by Father Amadeus of Venice, Vol. II., p. 183, Monza, 1873. This same favour had indeed been granted to St. Bernardine, on the eighth of September, 1436, while he was preaching, in this same town, on the glories of Mary.

direct his steps towards the Vicar of Jesus Christ, and to increase his confidence.

Eugenius IV., who was also very anxious about this matter, named a commission of inquiry. But the pious Pontiff was not to see the desired work of the canonization of Bernardine accomplished. John Capistran, the ardent promoter of this undertaking, had foretold to him that the honour was reserved for his successor.[29] While the examinations and inquiry needful for this important Cause were pending, our Saint was appointed to preach, in Italy, a crusade against the Turks. He did so with very great success. In 1446, Eugenius IV., again conferred the dignity of Legate on John Capistran, and bade him go to France to treat with king Charles VII. and the princes, on affairs which concerned the Holy See and all Christendom. The Saint immediately set forth on his journey. On his arrival at Avignon, Cardinal Peter of Foix, (junior) who was himself a Franciscan and Papal Legate for this country, gave him a letter of recommendation to noblemen and prelates, so that he might find help and protection during his journey through France. The success of his negotiations fully repaid him for his toil and brought great comfort to the heart of the Sovereign Pontiff.

Eugenius IV., wishing to give him a token of his esteem for the immense services he had rendered to the Church, offered him the bishopric of Aquila which had become vacant. The humble disciple of St. Francis replied that this honour was what he dreaded the most. He begged of the Pope not to impose a burthen on him of which he was unworthy, and he begged of him to leave him to his life of poverty in the cloister amid the labours of the priestly ministry. Eugenius IV., deeply moved by his humility, acceded to his wish, and sent him away blessing him. As soon as the Saint was gone, the Pope turned to the prelates of the Court and said to them, "If John Capistran were to

[29] Christopher of Varese.

die during our pontificate, we should not hesitate to inscribe his name at once among the Saints."[30] St. John Capistran also refused to accept the bishopric of Rieti

In the month of March, 1447, Eugenius IV., the friend of John Capistran and the protector of the Observance, died. Our Saint, who was then preaching the Lenten course, at Aquila, knew by revelation of the Pope's death. His companion was a German friar named Nicholas, they were reciting the Divine Office together and it was the custom of the Order to finish with the prayer for the Pope, *Deus, omnium fidelium pastor et rector.* His companion, not knowing of the death of Eugenius IV., said in reciting the prayer, *Famulum tuum Eugenium.* The Saint told him that he must say, *Famulum tuum Nicolaum.* "But," replied the friar, "I shall never be Pope." When they had finished their Office, Capistran said to his companion in a joking way. "If ever I am Pope, I will make you a Cardinal." Then he made known to him that Eugenius was dead and that his successor would bear the name of Nicholas V.[31]

Nicholas V., whose worldly name was Thomas of Sartiano, had heard from Capistran's own lips the prophecy regarding his great destiny. Having been raised to the archbishopric of Bologna, in reward for services rendered to the Church in Germany, his modesty made him look upon his reward as far greater than his deserts. St. John Capistran made him a visit of congratulation, and said to him, "Behold you are Archbishop of Bologna, but that will not be all, you are hastening on to the dignity of the Cardinalate, and with equally rapid steps to the honour of being Supreme Pontiff." Thomas of Sartiano blushed and begged of the Saint to desist from such evidently idle talk. "Your faith," answered Capistran, "is in keeping with your name. You are Thomas now, but soon you will change your name and with it your incredulity." When, two years later, the Archbishop

[30] *Vita di San Giovanni da Capistrano pel sac. Rotelli*, p. 103.

[31] Christopher of Varese, chap. 6.

of Bologna was raised to the See of Peter, by the unanimous vote of the Cardinals, Capistran wrote to pay him homage and to remind him of his prediction. "You see now, Holy Father," he said, "that you were Thomas when you would not believe." [82]

Under the new Pontiff, the illustrious religious continued to be employed in different and important matters. Nicholas V. appointed him Inquisitor of the Fratricelli, who were again astir spreading trouble abroad. The Jews and the Saracens, scattered about the Papal States and the other parts of Italy, had abused the favours which the Popes had granted them, and were molesting Christians, or spoiling them of their goods by unfair means, and blaspheming their faith. Capistran was given powers to proceed, not only against the Fratricelli, but also against the Jews and the other enemies of the Christian name in Italy. He applied himself with zeal to fulfil these important duties. His rest was in serving the Church and to her service he consecrated every moment of his life.

Amidst all these works, the Saint was not forgetful of what was most dear to his heart, namely the canonization of Bernardine of Siena. He was incessantly busied with it and followed it up, side by side, with the important works which were entrusted to him by the Popes. Nicholas V. resumed this Cause which had been begun by Eugenius IV., but it was thwarted by the enemies of Bernardine who were irritated by his memory after death as they had been by his zeal during life. Fresh obstacles arose with every step. It seemed almost like a cleverly organised conspiracy to baffle all the efforts, to tire out the good will of the friends of the Saint, and to bring to nought all their hopes.

The Pope, wavering in the midst of the difficulties raised against such an undertaking, hesitated. Capistran was treated as imprudent and indiscreet, he was often addressed in offensive words, and his courage would surely have failed

[82] *Ibid.*

if his heroic and holy friendship had had a purely earthly basis. Full of trust in God, he resolved to take a last step, to seek the Sovereign Pontiff, to throw himself at his feet and to entreat him not to put a stop to a Cause so much to the glory of God. "Holy Father," he cried, "if you have any fear, give orders that a funeral pile be raised and on it throw the body of Bernardine, I will cast myself on to it. If we are consumed by the fire, you must attribute it to my sins, if we are untouched by the flames you will know that the exaltation of Bernardine is according to God's Holy Will." [83] The Pope could not restrain his tears at the sight of such an excess of charity, and from that day he returned to his first resolution of speeding the canonization of the Apostle of Italy.

These dfficulties overcome, a graver and a harder one to conquer presented itself. Bernardine had for some months ceased to work miracles. Capistran had left Rome to preach the Lent at Aquila. Witness of this wonder of a new kind, he hoped that the time of heavenly miracles was not over, he even took upon himself to promise that miracles would be wrought. "No," he cried, "God will not allow the feast of Easter to pass without giving us comfort." Nevertheless the holy festivals passed without any wonders being wrought. Doubts began to spring up in men's hearts, the canonization of Bernardine must fall through if he gave no fresh proof of his power to silence the attacks of his enemies. Then Capistran, whose thoughts were above those of earth, went in the middle of the night to the place where the body of his illustrious master lay. He said to him, "You know what cares and hardships I have taken on myself for your sake, what will be my shame if I fail, what scandal will be reflected on souls. During your life on earth you eagerly obeyed me while I was your superior, to-day I ask for a fresh proof of your submission, and I command you, in the name of obedience, by virtue of

[83] *Ibid.*

the Holy Ghost, to work new miracles, if you have power before God." The Saint had spoken with that faith which moves mountains. In the morning, the sick and infirm thronged round the tomb of Bernardine, as was their wont, and every one of them returned home healed.[34]

In the meanwhile, Blessed Thomas of Florence had died at Rieti. Miracles had been wrought through his intercession, and already his canonization at the same time as that of Bernardine had been spoken of. This was a new Cause to be brought forward, fresh delays added to so many others, and new obstacles. Capistran, made uneasy by what he heard, went to Rieti, a town not far from Aquila, and commanded Brother Thomas, in the name of obedience, to cease to work any more miracles so long as Bernardine was not canonized. Thomas showed himself to be an obedient son after death as he had always been during life. For some years he was deaf to men's entreaties, and then again at the command of his superior, he hearkened anew to the prayers of the sick and obtained wonderful cures from God.[35]

In the midst of these proceedings, Capistran received consolation which was very grateful to him. Bernardine appeared to him and thanked him for his unwearied efforts in forwarding the work of his canonization.[36] Our Saint went to the Pope and told him of the favour which had been granted to him, hoping that a matter so agreeable to the Divine will of God and to the wishes of Christendom might be brought to a happy close. Nicholas V. seeing so much zeal, simplicity, innocence, and fervour in the servant of God, said to him one day, "And who, Brother John, will work for your canonization?" The humble Friar answered, "I am

[34] *Life of St. Bernardine*, by Father Amadeus of Venice, Vol. II., p. 193.

[35] *Life of St. Bernardine*, by Father Amadeus of Venice, Vol. II., p. 193. Christopher of Varese, chap. 6.

[36] Nicholas of Fara, chap. 6. *Life of St. Bernardine*, by Father Amadeus of Venice, Vol. II., p. 195.

a sinner, Holy Father, and such things are not due to sinners." [87]

The Sovereign Pontiff did not delay long before bringing this matter to a conclusion. A solemn occasion, that of the Jubilee of the year 1450, drew near, he joyfully took this opportunity of declaring the glory of Bernardine, amidst an immense concourse of the faithful gathered together from all parts of Christendom. St. John Capistran assisted at the triumph of his beloved Father, in company of about four thousand Religious of his Order, among whom were St. James della Marca, St. Didacus, and several other Franciscans of the Observance, whom the Church was in later days to rank among the number of the Saints. It is easily understood that this solemnity made John forget all the tribulations and anguish of mind he had suffered for several years. It was for the ardent and unwearied apostle, a delicious halt in the arduous way of penance and evangelical labours.

After the great ceremonies which took place on this occasion, Capistran gained a victory over the enemies of the Faith which made a great noise in Rome. He had a public dispute on religion with Gamaliel, the chief of the Synagogue in this city. By his clear arguments, by his vigorous logic, and by the irresistible power of his charity, he brought the Jew to confess the truth. Forty others were convinced, like their chief, of the fulfilment of the prophecies in the person of our Saviour, and followed the promptings of grace and received the Sacrament of Baptism.

After this brilliant victory, the Saint left Rome to resume his apostolic work in the different countries of Italy, where his presence was to spread or confirm the good already brought about by himself or by his brethren. Deputations and letters were sent to him from all parts. The honour of having him was contended for, he was asked to come for two days, for one day, or even for some hours. People were eager to see him and to hear him, it seemed as if they had

[87] Christopher of Varese, chap. 4.

a presentiment that he was about to be taken from Italy. Unable to satisfy the wishes of so many, Capistran exerted himself to the utmost, he preached the word of God in towns and hamlets, he corrected abuses and disorders, quieted dissensions, and performed miracles without number as he went on his way.

We have only been able to give a slight sketch of the prodigious works of our Saint in Italy. Before speaking of his mission in Germany, which crowned his glorious career, we must say something about the providential part he took in the regeneration of the Order of Friars Minor in the fifteenth century.

The fourteenth century was drawing to its close. "At this time almost the whole Order of Friars Minor had strayed from its path, "says Father Nicholas of Fara," scarcely one was to be found who wished to keep the Rule in all its purity." [88] But God watched over the work of His faithful servant, St. Francis. The Friars Minor of the Observance, according to the words of Leo X., having at their head St. Bernardine of Siena, and upheld by the holy Council of Constance, "brought back to life throughout the whole world the languishing and almost lifeless Order." [89]

To accomplish this great work of regeneration, St. Bernardine was powerfully aided by numberless disciples, among whom shine with greatest lustre St. John Capistran, St. James della Marca and Blessed Albert of Sartiano. Of all the disciples of Bernardine, John Capistran is undeniably the one whose action on the destinies of the Observance and the whole Order of Friars Minor was the most constant and the most decisive.

First of all may be adduced the testimony of the disciples of our Saint. "Under his government," says Father Christopher of Varese, "the Observance was greatly increased. At the time the blessed Father (John Capistran),

[88] Life of the Saint, by Nicholas of Fara.

[89] Leo X., in his Bull, *Ite et vos in vineam meam*, published in 1517.

entered the Order, there were but few convents of the Observance in Italy. Scarcely had he begun to exercise the ministry of preaching, than, by his care as well as by the zeal of St. Bernardine and that of the holy old man, Brother James della Marca, who is still living, these houses were multiplied throughout Christendom, so much so, that at the present day there is hardly a province where convents of Friars Minor of the Observance are not to be found. Not only did this blessed Father receive a great number of subjects into the Order but he further established new Provinces, as that of St. Bernardine, in Italy, those of Austria, of Bohemia, of Poland, and so on. He also founded convents in France, in Saxony, in Hungary, and in other parts of the world. . . . But the multitude of Friars of the Observance is so well known throughout the world, that my testimony here is superfluous. At the sight of the wonders worked daily by John Capistran, crowds proceeded from town to town to hear his sermons. Twenty, thirty, and sometfmes forty young men received the habit of St. Francis from his hands, in the presence of all the people. Many of them, directed by St. Bernardine or by himself, became men eminent in holiness, in science, and in doctrine, and, after death, God honoured them by miracles. . . . O, how often we have seen him in anguish and tears when he heard that men were trying to do harm to his religious family! No cost was too great for him to defend it, neither watchings, labours, austerities, nor sermons. He spent himself that he might keep his friars up to the observance of the Rule and help them to advance in perfection. Miracles and Divine help were not wanting for the defence of his works. Some Ministers General, who tried to destroy the Observance, died at the very time they had hoped to succeed in their attempt, and many of them on their death-bed recognised their error.[40] Father Nicholas of Fara also says that our Saint contributed powerfully to the spread of the

[40] Life of the Saint, by Christopher Varese, chap. 5.

Observance. He created new Provinces, founded a great number of convents in Italy, in France, and in Germany. He admitted into the Order a multitude of subjects illustrious by their doctrine and holiness, and by whom the greater number were glorified after their death by countless miracles. "Quorum et *plerique* post dormitionem multis signis, multisque prodigiis coruscarunt.[41]

The reform of the Observance was begun in Italy and in France about the middle of the fourteenth century. The Friars of the Observance in France were, from the first, governed by Blessed Thomas de la Cour, delegated by the Minister General, with the title of Vicar General. But as the work of the Reform met with great opposition from the Non-reformed religious, the Friars of the Observance in France had recourse to the holy Council of Constance, in 1415, and they were authorised to hold Chapters separately, to nominate Provincial Vicars, and a Vicar General whom the Minister General was to confirm in his office in the space of three days. These arrangements, approved by Martin V., were extended to the Friars of the Observance in Spain, and regulated, in consequence, the Ultramontane Provinces. The decree of the Council of Constance, without destroying the substantial unity of the Order, gave to the Ultramontane Friars of the Observance a distinct government, and superiors taken from among themselves, so as to maintain more efficaciously the purity of the Rule among them. They remained under the authority of the Minister General, but this authority was, with regard to them, restricted.

In Italy, the Reform begun in 1334, by Blessed John de la Vallée, taken up, consolidated aud extended by Blessed Paul of Trinci, was not included in the decree of Constance. Before, as after this Council, the Friars of the Observance of these Cismontane Provinces did not nominate their Vicar General, or Provincials. They were governed by Com-

[41] Life of the Saint, by Nicholas of Fara, Chap. vi.

missaries whom the Minister General chose from among themselves and whom he could depose at his pleasure. He was not even obliged to replace these Commissaries, and he could put the Friars of the Observance under superiors who had not embraced the Reform. This state of things, so harmful to the Observance, was changed, as we shall see, by Eugenius IV., according to the advice of St. John Capistran.

Blessed Paul of Trinci, promoter of the Reform, and Blessed John of Stroncone filled successively the office of Commissary General of the Friars of the Observance in Italy. In 1421, St. Bernardine of Siena exercised the same office for the Friars of the Observance in Umbria and Tuscany. His successors, named also by the Minister General, were Blessed Nicholas Uzzanio and Blessed Angelo of Civitella. The latter remained in office until the year 1430. At this time St. John Capistran was named by the Pope, Apostolic Commissary, and this title gave him the government of the whole body of the Observance. Dating from this period, it may be said that his influence never ceased to be exercised with regard to the direction of this branch of the Friars Minor, which was destined to work out the reform of the whole Order.

About the year 1429, under the government of Blessed Angelo of Civitella, the Friars of the Observance in Italy, were accused to Pope Martin V., of being suspected of heresy. A certain number of them were called to Rome and consigned, while their case was being examined, to the convent of St. Francis on the banks of the Tiber. Among these unjustly accused friars was St. John Capistran, who addressing his companions, said, "My sons, brethren, and fathers, it is by the will of our chief Pastor that we are confined in this holy place, but being ignorant of the motive of this sudden and unexpected confinement, we have no other remedy but to recommend our cause to God with all the fervour of our souls. If we turn to Him with filial

trust, He will surely come to our aid. This is the first and chief thing we have to do. As to the secondary and human means which we should use, it is my advice that one of us should be chosen as the defender of our Institute."

The wise advice of Capistran was accepted by his brethren, and he was unanimously chosen to plead their cause. The Saint had not much difficulty in justifying his brethren. His pleading was so eloquent and so persuasive that the three cardinals, appointed as judges of the matter, soon discovered the calumny and attested to the innocence of the accused religious.[42]

Knowing that the storm, of which we have just spoken, was raised against the Friars of the Observance by the Conventuals or the unreformed friars, Martin V. conceived the idea of uniting them all in one body. St. John Capistran also strongly desired that this should be done, but first he wished for the general reform of the Order whose falling away he bewailed. The division of the Friars of the Observance and the Conventuals had been brought about by the mitigations in the practice of the Rule among the latter, the complete fusion of the two branches could not take place if all abuses were not abolished, and the whole Order brought back to the perfect observance of the Rule. Our Saint persuaded Martin V. to call a General Chapter, to which the Friars of the Observance and the Conventuals should be summoned and at which the two great questions of the reform and the union of the Order were to be discussed.

This Chapter was held at Assisi, in the year 1430, and was presided over by Cardinal Cervantes, legate of the Pope. The legate, Christopher of Varese tells us, sent for John Capistran in order to seek his advice on the questions which the Chapter was to resolve. Our Saint was, in consequence, the soul as it were of this meeting. The Minister General, Antony of Massa, who had proved himself too weak in repressing abuses contrary to the Rule, was

[42] Nicholas of Fara, Chap. ii. Wadding, Vol. X.

deposed, and William of Cassal was elected in his stead. William of Cassal was a well-informed religious, of austere life, and very clever in business matters, and although he was a Conventual, he had always shown himself very favourable to the Observance.

St. John Capistran had been appointed by the Pope to draw up the statutes which prescribed the perfect observance of the Rule and the suppression of abuses introduced among the Conventuals. They were called "Martinite Statutes" because they were drawn up by order of Martin V. and approved by this Pontiff. These statutes were to be put in force in the whole Order and thus was to be brought about the reform of the Conventuals, whose laxity had been till then the only obstacle to their fusion with the Friars of the Observance, and consequently to the union of the Order. The Cardinal Legate ordered the statutes of the Reform to be read in full Chapter. All the religious unanimously approved of them and the Conventuals swore to observe them by renouncing the mitigations introduced among them against the purity of the Rule. The new Minister General, William of Cassal, added an oath that he would never ask for a dispensation from the statutes. By this great act, the whole Order was reformed, and the fusion of the two Branches was to be the outcome. The Cismontane Friars of the Observance and Ultramontanes then renounced their Vicars or Commissaries General, and Provincial. The Order was thus brought back to unity as well as to the perfect observance of the Rule. That day was truly a day of triumph for Capistran, of triumph for the Legate, of triumph for the whole Franciscan family.

Alas! this union was not to last long. The Chapter had hardly been dissolved, before the Conventuals, considering the yoke they had laid on their own shoulders, repented of their haste and went to the Legate to be released from their oath. The Legate acceded to their request so as to prevent a greater evil.

Nevertheless the Martinite Statutes were maintained. Further, the Cardinal Legate chose John Capistran to office and associated him with the Minister General in the government of the whole Order. To the one and the other, he prescribed that they should try to have these wise Constitutions everywhere adopted, the result of which was to be the reform of the Order. After the Chapter, William of Cassal and John Capistran undertook to make together a visitation of the Order, their presence everywhere worked wonderful changes. Abuses were discontinued, Franciscan poverty was again held in honour, and their efforts were visibly blessed by Heaven. But the obstacles put in the way of the introduction of the Reform, by the Conventuals, caused the zeal of the General, William of Cassal, to slacken. He dared not push his undertaking any further, where abuses were evident he no longer raised his voice against them, he shut his eyes, he said, to avoid greater evils. Then, in his turn, he sought to be released from the oath by which he had bound himself never to concur in the suppression or the mitigation of the statutes of the Reform. Seeing the difficulty there existed in remedying the abuses, which on account of the evils of the time, had been introduced among the Conventuals, he thought to provide for the peace of consciences by obtaining from Martin V. the Bull, *Ad statum Ordinis*, which authorised the dispensation from the precept of Franciscan poverty, for all the convents which he could not bring back to the practice of the Rule, or induce to give up all income and landed property.

This was the first general dispensation granted by the Holy See to the Conventuals. The mitigations brought in among them were sanctioned by the Church and thus made lawful.[43] The Friars of the Observance, who earnestly

[43] The Conventuals did not accept the Martinite Statutes, as they thought them too severe, The Friars of the Observance, on their side, took up the old Constitutions of the Order, called, of St. Bonaventure, which they had till then observed, because these Constitutions were much

desired to keep the Rule in its primitive strictness, felt more than ever their need of banding together under the direction of their Vicars General, so as to keep in the way marked out by their Seraphic Patriarch.

It was not without deep sorrow that John Capistran saw his beloved work crumble to pieces. He had, for four months, accompanied the Minister General, William of Cassal, in his visitation of the Order, but when he was no longer aided by the latter, his efforts for the work of the Reform became fruitless,[44] he was obliged to give them up so as to devote himself to his dear brethren of the Observance.

Our Saint then perceived that the union of the Friars of the Observance and the Conventuals would not result in the reform of the latter and would only serve to weaken, among the former, the practices of the Observance.[45] He saw that the general reform of the Order could only be wrought by separating the Conventuals from the Friars who were desirous of following faithfully in the footsteps of their holy Patriarch, and by encouraging the increase of these true observers of the Rule of St. Francis. In fact the Observance did go on increasing while the number of those who made use of dispensations daily decreased. Thus almost the whole Order was reformed insensibly and without any violent shock.

By virtue of the union decreed at the general Chapter of Assisi the Friars of the Observance found themselves joined

more severe than the Martinite Statutes, and served better to the more perfect kind of life which they had embraced.

[44] Nicholas of Fara, Chap. ii.

[45] In the beginning, St. John Capistran was very much in favour of this union which he thought would be a means of reforming the whole Order. Thus he disapproved of the French Friars of the Observance having requested the Council of Constance to grant them a distinct government, but experience soon entirely modified his opiniod on that point, as we learn from his disciple, Christopher of Varese. (Life of the Saint, by Christopher of Varese, Chap. v.)

to the Conventuals although the latter had refused to accept the Reform. Feeling that this union would lead to the ruin of the Observance, by introducing into it, little by little, the dispensations used by the Conventuals, John Capistran had recourse to Eugenius IV., lately raised to the Chair of St. Peter. He begged of the Pontiff to reinstate the Observance as it was before the last General Chapter, that is to say to give back its vicars, with its own distinct manner of life, but at the same time without destroying the substantial unity of the Order.

Eugenius IV., who held our Saint in great esteem and affection, acceded to his request and promised always to protect his religious family and in all things to aid in its extension. Further the Pope placed John Capistran at the head of the whole Branch of the Observance, with the title of Commissary Apostolic, holding special and very extensive powers. He also authorized him to convoke, at Bologna, a General Chapter of the Friars of the Observance in Italy,[46] there to discuss their own affairs and to have the liberty of nominating their provincial Vicars. The Sovereign Pontiff asked of the Fathers of the Chapter of Bologna to choose and to reserve for him, for the different wants of the Church, six of the most learned and holy friars. Some years after, Eugenius IV. sent them to the various schismatic nations of the East to labour for their return to the Church of Rome. Success soon crowned the efforts of these worthy sons of St. Francis, Greeks, Armenians, and the Christians of Ethiopia, were brought by them to the Council of Florence, and entered the pale of the Catholic Church.

St. John Capistran governed the Observance, in the office of Commissary Apostolic from the year 1430 to 1438.[47]

[46] This was the first General Chapter held by the Cismontane Friars of the Observance. The Ultramontane Friars of the Observance, by virtue of the Decree of the Council of Constance, had already held several Chapters for the election of their Vicars General.

[47] Gonzaga. *De Origine Seraphica Religionis*, p. 12.

Without giving up his apostolic works or the legations with which he was charged by the Holy See, he watched with solicitude over his beloved religious family. No one propagated it with more success, no one protected it with so much courage, no one led it with greater zeal along the path of the sublime poverty and the high perfection marked out by the Seraphic Patriarch. Capistran was the perfect model of a shepherd of souls. His brethren seeing his wisdom, prudence, learning, and holiness, his contemporary biographers tell us, would have wished to have him always at their head.

In 1438, St. John Capistran went to Ferrara to confer with Eugenius IV. on the interests of the Franciscan Order. He persuaded the Pope to confide the government of the Friars of the Observance in Italy to a Vicar General, and proposed St. Bernardine of Siena to fill this office. Eugenius IV. agreed to this project, and William of Cassal, Minister General of the Order, hastening to comply with the wish of the Sovereign Pontiff, appointed St. Bernardine of Siena as his Vicar General to the Cismontane Friars of the Observance and invested him, for the government of this religious family, with the powers which he himself held for the whole Order.

Freed from the burden of superiority, Capistran was sent, as we have already said, to the East, where he treated about some matters concerning the convents in the Holy Land, and laboured for the return to the Church of the Armenian schismatics. He afterwards went as Legate, to the Milanese and to Burgundy, in order to fight against the upholders of the schismatic meeting at Bâle. During his first journey into France, he had an interview with St. Colette.[48]

St. Bernardine, who was now spent with age and the results of his glorious labours, begged Eugenius IV. to

[48] See the Life of St. Colette, March the sixth, Vol. I. p. 379. This first interview with the holy Reformer must have taken place about the year 1439 or 1440.

discharge him from the office of Vicar General. In the interests of the Order, the Pope was unwilling to grant this request, but he authorised him to take one of his disciples as an assistant to lighten his own burthen. St. Bernardine chose John Capistran and sent him as Visitor to the provinces of Bologna, of Milan, and of Genoa. This was in the beginning of the year 1441. Bernardine's choice was inspired by God, he could not in fact have found in the whole Franciscan family, a man of more trustworthy judgment, of greater knowledge, or of more unwearied energy. Capistran equalled his master, St. Bernardine, in holiness, and he perhaps excelled him in aptitude for government and in management of business matters. He hastened to respond to the call of his beloved father, Bernardine, happy in being able to help him in his declining years and in contributing to the strengthennig and the extension of a work so dear to the heart of both.

During a journey he made through Lombardy, Capistran was once obliged to cross the Po, he begged the boatman to take him over out of charity. The boatman refused, and the Saint trusting himself to God, cast his cloak on the waters, and kneeling thereon he bade his companions do the same, they were thus transported to the opposite bank and their cloaks which had served them for barks were not even wet.

Meanwhile the Minister General, William of Cassal, had died at Florence, on the second of February, 1442, and Eugenius IV. had appointed Blessed Albert of Sartiano Vicar General of all the Order, till the General Chapter which was to be held at Padua in the following year. It was the wish of the holy Pontiff, that he should work for the reform of the Conventuals. Worthy in all respects of the Pope's choice, Albert of Sartiano, disciple of St. Bernardine of Siena, was one of the pillars, one of the greatest ornaments of the Observance. The Conventuals of Venice, appreciating his great qualities, had just elected

him for their Provincial. As Vicar General, his authority extended over the whole Order of Friars Minor, over the Conventuals as well as over the Friars of the Observance. St. Bernardine took this opportunity of getting relieved of the office of Vicar General of the Friars of the Observance in Italy. No one was appointed to succeed him, the whole Order being then under the government of a Religious of the Observance.

Albert of Sartiano wished, like St. Bernardine, to have John Capistran joined with himself in the government of the Order. He named him Vicar General of the Franciscan Provinces of France, of Touraine, of Burgundy, and of those countries situated beyond the Alps and which, on this account, the Italians call "Ultramontane." He also appointed him his Commissary for all the Provinces and the communities of friars and nuns of the Order, for the Friars of the Observance as well as for the Conventuals, with mission to work, according to the wish of the Pope, for the reform of the latter, and for the spread of the Observance. Eugenius IV. fully approved of the choice of Albert of Sartiano, and in his turn he charged our Saint to go as Apostolic Delegate wherever his superior should direct, in order to fight against the schism of Bâle and to restore union and religious peace to these provinces. He renewed all powers with which he had at different times invested him, and he ordered that religious of every rank should obey and help him in all his undertakings according as he thought fit.

The holy apostle set out for France without troubling himself about the toil and obstacles which awaited him. He went from province to province, preaching to the people, abolishing abuses which had crept into communities and reviving the Seraphic spirit. At the time of his visit to Vienne in Dauphiné, he stigmatized in his sermon the presumptuous and rash conduct of the schismatics of Bâle who had dared to elect an antipope during the life time of

the lawful Pontiff, Eugenius IV. Some doctors, wounded by the words of the man of God, spread the report that they were about to challenge him to a public dispute. The next day, the Saint repeated what he had said the day before, supported what he had said by solid arguments and invited his opponents to enter into the open discussion which they had appeared to desire, but no one dared come forward.[49] In Burgundy, he deposed, by apostolic authority, the Provincial Minister of the Conventuals of this Province, on account of his obstinate persistence in erroneous doctrines.[50]

St. John Capistran was at Besançon in the beginning of November, 1442. On the eighth of November of this year, he wrote a letter to St. Colette, dated from this town, in which he renews for her reform the faculties and privileges which she had already received from former Ministers General, and he gave her power to choose, either herself or through her confessor, the religious of the Order appointed to make the canonical visitation of her communities. The letter begins thus, "To our very dear daughter in Christ, the Spouse of Virgins, the devout Sister Colette of the Order of St. Clare, Brother John Capistran of the Order of Minors, delegated to these Provinces by the Apostolic See and by the most Reverend Father Vicar General, health and everlasting peace in the Lord. Desiring in our fatherly love to comfort you in the Lord, we confirm and ratify by present graces all the privileges granted by Ministers General either to you or to Father Devaux, your confessor, or to the confessors of the monasteries of nuns founded by you, or to be founded."[51] The authority of the Saint over St. Colette and her daughters, was in virtue of being the Visitor delegated by Albert of Sartiano, supreme head of the Order, and also as being Apostolic Nuncio, invested with special powers, not only for the general affairs of the Church but also for the administration of the Order. It was in fact as

[49] Christopher of Varese, Chap. vii.

[50] *Ibid.* [51] Boll., Vol. X. for October.

delegate of the Holy See that he deposed the Minister of the Conventuals of the Province of Burgundy. Historians tell us that before returning to Italy, St. John Capistran had a second interview with St. Colette, but it is not known at what exact time or in what town their meeting took place.

The Saint also visited Spain, Flanders, England, and Ireland, in these countries he wrought great good and drew immense numbers to join the Observance more by his example than by his words. On his return to Italy he proceeded to the holy mount Alvernia and there spent some days in retreat.

As we have already said, Capistran made, in 1446, his last journey to France, on a mission from Eugenius IV. to King Charles VII. He was therefore sent three times to France, the country of his ancestors, either in the general interests of the Church, or for the visitation and the reform of houses of the Order. Contemporary biographers, in fact, tell us that St. John Capistran founded convents in France. He himself in a letter, written in 1452, to one of the Hussite chiefs of Bohemia, cites France among the countries which he had evangelised. "My doctrine," he says, "is known not only in Italy, but in France, in Germany, in Spain, and in other parts of the world. I have not preached in secret but in public places and in the midst of the most populous cities."

During the course of the year 1443, a General Chapter of the Order, formed of Friars of the Observance and Conventuals, was held at Padua, for the election of a Minister General, Blessed Albert of Sartiano being president. It was the wish of Eugenius IV. that an Observant of the Family should be elected to the office, he had even thought of Albert of Sartiano, who had already governed the Order with so much prudence as Vicar General. But in order not to displease the Conventuals too much, St. Bernardine of Siena dissuaded the Pope from this idea and the election

having been deferred, by all the voters, to him, he appointed Father Antony Rusconi, who according to the author of *Secoli Serafici*, was an Observant of the community. After the holding of this Chapter, Eugenius IV., in order to facilitate the government of the Observance, already wonderfully spread, divided it into two Families, and bade the Minister General depute St. John Capistran to be Vicar General of the Friars of the Observance of the Cismontane family, and Father John Maubert, with the same title, of the Friars of the Observance of the Ultramontane family. The Pontiff himself confirmed this twofold election. St. John Capistran filled the office of Vicar General of the Cismontane Friars of the Observance until the year 1446. It was during these three years of office that St. Bernardine died at Aquila, and that our Saint began to occupy himself about his canonization.

About the year 1443, Pope Eugenius IV. had given to the Friars of the Observance the convent of Ara Cœli,[52] where since the days of St. Bonaventure, the Ministers General of the Order had dwelt. Our Saint called thither the religious of the principal countries, and appointed two Commissaries or Procurators General, to treat with the Holy See on the affairs of the two Families of the Observance. This wise arrangement was approved of by Eugenius IV.

One of the chief cares of the Saint during his time of office as Vicar General was to promote study in the Cismontane Provinces of the Observance confided to his charge. He wished to see the religious of his Order versed in the science of Holy Scripture, of Canon Law, of the Fathers of the Church, of dogma, of moral and mystic Theology. An Order that is called to sow the seed of the word of God among nations ought, indeed, to be conspicuous for learning, it ought to be initiated into the secrets of Sacred science,

[52] In the convent of Ara Cœli, where the Minister General of the Order resides at the present time, is shown the cell of St. John Capistran and that of St. Bernardine of Siena.

to be qualified to shed light on every path, to dispel error and to be able to unmask it notwithstanding any subterfuge. Convinced of this necessity, St. John Capistran bade the Provincial appoint one or more convents where humanities and ecclesiastical science were to be taught. He did not allow the office of preacher or confessor to be given to religious who were not sufficiently instructed, and he recommended Superiors not to give manual labour to those Friars who showed an aptitude for study.

These regulations gave rise to complaints. Some of the religious did not agree with the Saint in his ideas, they feared the love of learning might grow too strong among the friars, and might end by impairing the humility and simplicity of their institute. John Capistran had not much difficulty in combating such objections. He could instance St. Bernardine as a man skilled in sacred science, who had studied with persevering diligence everything that could be required in the exercise of his vast ministry. He had risen to the summit of learning, and yet the Reform never had a more holy religious, a more zealous promoter, or a more powerful support. Bernardine had also among his disciples, men eminent for their learning, and these were always the most humble among the brethren. Pope Eugenius IV. wished himself to confirm these wise regulations in favour of study, and our Saint, in reply to the objections raised against them, wrote a very remarkable treatise entitled, *De promovendo studio, inter Minores Observantes.*

St. John Capistran, besides, faithfully complied with the holy teaching of his Seraphic Father, by watching with the greatest care that study should not lessen the spirit of humility and of prayer in those who gave themselves thereto. His efforts specially tended to develope and to keep up among all his brethren these fundamental virtues of religious life. On this point nothing escaped his watchful eye, as nothing was able to impose upon his great experience.

In the year 1445, a friar of great fame arrived in Rome,

his name was Justin of Hungary. He had given up all the seductions of wealth and the favour of his sovereign and had taken the habit of St. Francis. God, Who never lets Himself be outdone in generosity, had by signal favours rewarded the detachment of His servant from earthly goods and honours, and in his solitude He had raised him to the most exalted prayer. A desire to see the spots made famous by the presence of St. Francis had drawn Brother Justin to Italy. When in Rome, he lodged at the convent of Ara Cœli, where John Capistran happened to be at the time. The lives of the Saints were being read in the refectory. Now one day while this reading was going on, Justin fell into an ecstacy. He was motionless and as if dead, then rising from the ground, he went and placed himself before a picture of our Lady that was hanging on the wall, and there he remained with his legs bent as if kneeling. After the meal, the friars went as usual to the choir, John Capistran stayed behind in the refectory. He shut the door and awaited the end of the ecstacy. Everything passsd in a way to reassure him. Brother Justin on coming to himself was tranquil in soul and calm in countenance, his humility was sincere. Everything showed that the spirit of God had been at work on this occasion.

Pope Eugenius IV. heard of this wonderful occurrence, and wished to see the Hungarian friar. When Justin threw himself upon his knees to kiss his feet, the Sovereign Pontiff hastened to raise him and showed him the greatest marks of esteem and of fatherly love. The effect of this kindness of the Vicar of Jesus Christ on the poor religious was, as it were, like a thunderbolt. Proud and self-complacent thoughts entered his soul and took root there, producing at once the most lamentable results. When he returned to the convent of Ara Cœli, he met the Vicar General, John Capistran, to whom God had revealed all that had passed. He sighed deeply on meeting Justin, and said, "Ah, poor brother, a little show of honour has been enough to turn

your head! What a fearful change has been wrought in you! You left this abode an angel and you have come back a devil. Look into your own heart, humble yourself under the mighty Hand of God, Who looks favourably on the humble and turns His eyes away from the proud, Who gives grace to the lowly and resists the haughty. But the words of the Saint did not touch this soul so deeply wounded by self-esteem. His pride soon made him unbearable to the brethren, and, soon leaving the convent, he died miserably, without entering into himself, nor even thinking of the spiritual sweetness with which in former days his soul had been inebriated. "Blessed is the man that is always fearful." [53]

In 1445, towards the end of his three years of office, St. John Capistran obtained from Eugenius IV., the Bull, *Ut Sacra Ordinis Minorum*, which, it seems, was not published till the following year, after he had left office. This Bull applied to the whole body of the Observance regulations similar to those published in 1415, by the Council of Constance, in favour of the Friars of the Observance in France. According to this Bull, each of the two families of the Observance was to hold Chapters and elect their Vicars General whom the Minister General of the Order was to be obliged to confirm within three days. Each Province was to elect its Provincial Vicar, and the Vicars, General as well as Provincial, elected only for three years, were to have the same authority over their subjects as the Ministers. The Minister General of the whole Order, who was habitually chosen from among the Conventuals, was to exercise power over the Friars of the Observance either by the right of visitation, or by the right of confirming their Vicars General. The two Branches of the Order thus formed one body under one head. By reason of the arrangements of this Bull, the substantial unity of the Order was secured, and the Friars of the Observance, by favour of a special administration,

[53] Prov. xxviii. 14.

were shielded from the laxity which would have crept in among them had they been too closely united with the Conventuals.

This famous Bull of Eugenius IV. was, it is true, modified later on by Calixtus III., but St. John Capistran predicted to his disciples that the Bull would be republished. Pius II. did indeed bring it back into force, and the Observance was ruled by it till the year 1517. At this time, the Friars of the Observance formed the chief and the most numerous body of the Order, so Leo X. made it a rule that the Minister General of the Order, the successor of St. Francis, should for the future be elected by them and chosen exclusively from among their number. This regulation of the Holy See remains in force to the present day.

In 1446, St. John Capistran, whose three years of office were ended, summoned all the Cismontane Friars of the Observance to the convent of Ara Cœli for the purpose of electing his successor. The long and glorious pontificate of Eugenius IV. was drawing to its close, and he, recognizing the services rendered to the Church by the sons of the Franciscan family, wished to give them a mark of his love by presiding at this General Chapter. It was into the Pope's hands that Capistran gave up his office, and in his stead Blessed James Primadizzi of Bologna, was elected. He was a man noted for his doctrine, his piety, and his apostolic labours. He had been deputed to work in the East, for the reunion of schismatics with the Church, and God had sealed his fame by the gift of miracles. James Primadizzi was worthy to rule over his brethren, he was fit to lead them in the path of poverty and of perfect abnegation. In 1449, at the expiration of the three years of office of James Primadizzi, the General Chapter was convoked at the convent *del Bosco*,[54] in the country of Mugello, not far

[54] The Friars Minor of the Observance are still in possession of this convent founded by St. Francis, and in which St. Bonaventure received the cardinal's hat.

from Florence. St. John Capistran was unanimously chosen Vicar General of the Cismontane Friars of the Observance. He would have implored the brethren not to lay this burthen on his shoulders, had he not been warned by God the day before, while he was saying Mass, that he must yield to what would be done. He resigned himself, therefore, though deploring it, and again made the sacrifice of the rest which his old age seemed to require, and which he saw would never be his in this world.

During the course of the year 1450, Capistran made the visitation of his communities in Tuscany. On the feast of the Assumption, he was at the convent of Borgo San Sepolcro, near Arezzo, while taking his repast his eyes were raised suddenly towards Heaven, his face was lighted up with a ray of joy, and he cried out, as if beside himself, "O Fathers! I see the soul of one of our brethren ascending to its heavenly home. O, how brilliant it is! how beautiful!" Then God made known to him that this was the soul of Blessed Albert of Sartiano, "the trumpet of the Holy Gospel." Albert had died that very day at Milan, and God was about to honour his tomb by many miracles.

The Conventuals saw with sorrow a considerable portion of the Order, the branch of the Observance, separating itself from them, a branch which numbered so many men eminent for their holiness and their learning, who had the favour of princes, and the veneration of the faithful. They, therefore, tried to obtain from Nicholas V. the revocation of the Bull, *Ut sacra Ordinis Minorum*, by which the Friars of the Observance formed a distinct branch, ruled by its own laws, with freedom to keep in its perfection the Rule of St. Francis. They were even supported by some members of the Observance, who were favourable to this plan under the pretext of union in the Order.

The Saint, considering the consequences of such a step, was deeply grieved, he had recourse to his usual weapons, he prayed and made others pray, he ordered fasts and other

penances so as to try and avert the danger with which his spiritual Family was threatened.[55]

God soon gave him comfort. Blessed Francis of Pavia, a friar given to contemplation and favoured with extraordinary graces, zealously complied with the wishes of the Vicar General, and shed many tears while imploring the mercy of God. Our Lord vouchsafed to appear to him, "Why are you so troubled?" He said, "to Whom does this work belong? Whose is this Family? is it not Mine? I will make it prosper, I will make of you a great people, a people innumerable, *Ego crescere faciam in gentem magnam, quæ præ multitudine numerari non poterit.* Who has gathered together this Family from so many different nations? Who has multiplied it in so short a time and in the midst of so many obstacles? It is I Who have done all this, and I will protect it against all its enemies. Those who cause you sorrow shall not do it with impunity, those who forsake this manner of life will repent of it, those who remain faithful will find it to their advantage, I will replace deserters by others who will receive their crowns."

Then our Lord showed to the holy friar, under the form of a symbol, the abundant and divers operations of grace. He explained His workings in men's hearts, adding, "In order that this grace be given to you. . . . You should put on the armour of a twofold humility. In the first place, contrite and humble in the presence of God, you should eagerly submit yourselves to your superiors and to every creature for God's sake, and you should beg His help faithfully to correspond with your vocation. Then you must not despise those who are less perfect, or take complacency in yourselves, or pride yourselves on excelling them, but work out your salvation with fear and trembling, having pity on the weak." As this vision vanished, Blessed Francis of

[55] The Conventuals had already obtained from Nicholas V. the suppression of the Bull of Eugenius IV. for the Friars of the Observance of the Province of Tours, 1447, and of that of Castille in 1449.

Pavia was as if beside himself, his face was glowing and as on fire. As he came down from the House of God, he exclaimed, "O holy humility! O holy humility! how great is your virtue, how great your power!" [56]

He sought the Vicar General and revealed to him his vision. Capistran, in his turn, told it to the chief members of the Observance, in order to give them courage in their trial, and to point out to them the way they should act while the storm was raging. Then he addressed himself directly to Nicholas V. and obtained that the Bull of Eugenius IV. should be adhered to. If later, during the absence of our Saint in Germany, opportunity was taken to ask for modifications of this Bull, Pius II., as we have said, again put it into full force for the two families of the Observance.

The canonization of St. Bernardine, which took place in 1450, was a triumph for the Observance and singularly helped to strengthen it. On this occasion, St. John Capistran summoned not only the Cismontane Friars of the Observance but also those of the Ultramontane family. He was always careful to keep up a close union between the two families, which have never formed but one Institute, this division having only been made to facilitate the government of a body which had become so large. Blessed John Maubert, Vicar General of the Ultramontane Friars of the Observance, had died in 1450, the General Chapter was then to meet at Barcelona, on the thirteenth of June, 1451, under the presidency of Father Theodore Voiturier, Provincial of the Friars of the Observance of the French Province, for the purpose of electing his successor. St. John Capistran wrote a beautiful letter of condolence to the Fathers in Chapter, on the death of John Maubert. He exhorted them to choose for his successor, a man having all the needful qualities for a shepherd of souls, and he begged of them to draw closer and closer the tie which knit the two Families together.

[56] Wadding. Boll., Vol. X. Oct. *Vita Sancti Joannis a Cap. Comm. præv.*

The solicitude of John Capistran was extended to the whole Franciscan family, to the daughters of St. Clare, to the Third Order, as well as to the Order of Friars Minor. "He increased and extended," says Nicholas of Fara, more than any one else, not only the First Order of St. Francis, but also the Second and the Third.[57] He founded or reformed a great many monasteries of the Second Order, by putting into force the First Rule of St. Clare, as St. Colette did in France. He especially reformed the monastery of St. William, at Ferrara, and another monastery at Perugia. By his advice and under his direction, Blessed Antoinette of Florence founded at Aquila, a community of poor Clares following the primitive Rule. He also spread the Third Order in Italy as well as in Germany, and undertook the defence of the Tertiaries in a remarkable work, entitled *Defensorium Tertii Ordinis a Sancto Francisco instituti.*

St. John Capistran left Italy towards the middle of the year 1451, to go to Germany, which was to be the last scene of his labours. In 1452, the General Chapter of the Cismontane Friars of the Observance was held at Aquila, and Blessed Mark Fantuzzi of Bologna, was elected as his successor in the government of the Order. The new Vicar General hastened to appoint John Capistran as his Commissary in the provinces of Germany, so that he might there found the Order, spread it, and govern it.

It was in the year 1451, that, uneasy at the progress of heresy and the threatening pretensions of the Hussite sectarians, Frederic III., Emperor of Germany, and his brother Albert, Duke of Austria, begged of Pope Nicholas V. to send John Capistran to them, for his fame was spread over the whole of Europe.[58] They hoped to find in him a bulwark against the anti-social errors of the day, and also a peacemaker who would bring back union and concord

[57] Life of the Saint, by Nicholas of Fara, Chap. v.

[58] Nicholas of Fara, Chap. vii.

among the German princes. They relied on his holiness as much as on his great abilities and his eminent learning. Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini, who was afterwards Pope under the title of Pius the II., was at the head of the embassy charged to deliver the imperial missive to the Sovereign Pontiff. St. John Capistran was named Apostolic Nuncio and Inquisitor General for Germany. Before setting out on this important and difficult mission, the holy apostle made a pilgrimage to Assisi. Then he chose twelve companions, among whom were Father Gabriel of Verona, who was afterwards made a Cardinal, Father Christopher of Varese and Father Nicholas of Fara, who have written the life of the Franciscan apostle. The pious band went on foot, going on their way in prayer and recollection, an ass carrying their scanty baggage. The things of this world were as nothing to these truly apostolic men, they were occupied with the glory of God alone and the triumph of His Church. Having once to cross the river Siliano, near Treviso, the boatman refused to take them over as they had no money with which to pay him. Trusting in Divine Providence, John Capistran spread St. Bernardine's cloak upon the waters, and they divided, the friars reached the opposite bank with dry feet, and then the river flowed on again as usual.

The journey of our Saint through the towns and villages of Lombardy was a real triumph. Immense crowds came out to meet him, and they returned glorifying God for the wonders which He wrought by means of His servant. Each day fresh miracles took place. The sick came from all parts, expecting from him what they had sought in vain from human skill, and the prayer of faith was granted. Nothing could withstand the man of God. The fame of all these miracles spread through all Germany. Whole populations went forth to meet Capistran, he was received as the messenger of God, and on his approach they entoned the canticle of triumph, *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the*

Lord. The Emperor Frederic, the princes of the Empire and the nobles of the Court, joined their homage to that of the people and deemed it a point of honour to show him the truest veneration.

Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini, who saw our Saint at the time of his stay in Vienna, thus speaks of his entry into Germany, "John Capistran came to Germany, sent by the Holy See, and arrived in Austria by way of Carinthia and Styria. The clergy and the people went to meet him, bearing the relics of the Saints, and received him as Legate of the Holy See, as a great prophet, and as a messenger from God. All the inhabitants came down from the mountains to meet him, as if Peter or Paul, or one of the apostles, had come to visit them, eager to touch the hem of his garments. They brought out the sick to him, and the greater number were healed. He stayed some days at Neustadt, preaching the word of God and calling men to penance. The news reached Vienna that a Saint had come to Neustadt, an apostle of God, who taught the way of the Lord in truth, who despised money, fled from honours, and lived a life of the most austere penance. People hastened in crowds to see him. A deputation composed of the chief persons of the city was sent to conduct him to Vienna, for it was feared he would return to Italy, or that he would proceed to Hungary without stopping, which they would have regretted as being a great disgrace and a dishonour to the inhabitants of this town.

"Accepting this invitation, John set out for Vienna. There was from all parts such a stir of people, such a concourse, that no public place was found large enough to hold this multitude. Everywhere, the crowd hastened to see the love of God. As he passed they shed tears of joy and of devotion, they lifted their hands to Heaven to bless him who had come to visit them, they wished to kiss, or at least to touch, the garments of him whom God had sent. He was looked upon as an angel of God sent from Heaven. He

went to lodge with his companions at the Friars Minor, Conventuals. . . . We saw him at Vienna. He was short of stature, advanced in years, (he said he was sixty-five,) withered, emaciated, worn out, being nothing but skin and bone, and yet he was always cheerful and unwearied in his labours. He preached every day, handling the deepest subjects, pleasing alike the simple and the learned. He had from twenty to thirty thousand hearers daily. He preached in Latin and an interpreter translated his discourse.[59]

Father Nicholas of Fara, in a letter to the Provincial and religious of Tuscany, also speaks of the stir made among the people of Germany, on the arrival of St. John Capistran. He says, "Most honoured Fathers, your singular kindness compels me to inform you of the great, astounding, and admirable effects which the Most High deigns to work daily by the ministry of our saintly old man. You will thereby perceive how our good God shows Himself rich towards all in these latter times, mercifnl, clement, liberal, not only to the Italians, but also to the Germans, Moldavians, Bohemians, and Hungarians. The Lord has glorified our holy old man among these people by so many and so great prodigies, that he has been received everywhere, not as a mortal man, but as an angel from Heaven. The people follow him everywhere, to a distance of three, four, and even five hundred miles. Grand processions come forth to meet him, with crosses, relics, banners, and lights, singing hymns and canticles. The roads are strewn with boughs and flowers, and those who can touch or kiss the hem of his garment think themselves only too happy. What shall I say of the numbers who come from all sides to behold our Father? We sometimes see one hundred thousand men, nay, even one hundred and fifty thousand. Not to speak of the feast of Corpus Christi, when, it is said, that three hundred thousand men were gathered together in this

[59] *History of the Emperor Frederic III.* by Æneas Sylvius, afterwards Pope Pius II.

city of Vienna. The number of those who are present at his sermons, is usually very considerable. His hearers have sometimes amounted to sixty thousand, eighty thousand, and even a hundred thousand. What shall I say of the number of sick persons? We see as many as three thousand, four thousand, and five thousand, who wait for the Father's blessing that they may be healed. Never since the days of the Apostles has such a stir among the people been seen. This is my opinion and that of several persons far more enlightened than myself." [60]

The last five years of John's life were filled up with his immense labours in Germany. During this period, he evangelised Carinthia, Styria, Austria, Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Bavaria, Thuringia, Saxony, Misnia, Franconia, Poland, Transylvania, Moldavia, Wallachia, Prussia, and other provinces. His progress was marked by miracles, innumerable cures, and sometimes by the dead being raised to life. He brought back to God countless sinners, Jews, heathens, schismatics and heretics, known in Germany as Hussites, Taborites, and Patarins. Public morals were everywhere reformed, to the greater glory of God. He founded convents of his Order wherever he went. He drew souls away from the world by his preaching. At Leipzig, one hundred and twenty students of the university embraced religious life. Sixty of these received the Franciscan habit from his hands. At Breslau, he received sixty into his Order, at Cracow, one

[60] This letter was written from Vienna, on the twenty-fourth of July, 1451, about two months after our Saint had entered Germany. All that the companions of St. John Capistran tell us of his labours in Germany, of the enthusiasm of the people, and the success of his preaching, is confirmed, not only by Æneas Sylvius, but also by the chroniclers of those provinces. We have also the letters written by Matthew Corvin, King of Hungary, Don Nicholas, Waiwode of Transylvania, and other persons, with the object of promoting the Saint's canonization. The German libraries contain innumerable manuscripts concerning St. John Capistran, which bear witness to the deep impression left by the Saint, on his passage through those provinces.

hundred and thirty, at Vienna, two hundred, and so on in other places. This wondrously fruitful apostleship of St. John Capistran was finally crowned by the famous victory of Belgrade, which saved Christian Europe.

On entering Germany, St. John directed his steps, as we have said, towards Austria, Carinthia, and Styria. He stopped at Neustadt, where he had an interview with the emperor. After spending six days in that town, where he wrought many cures, he went to Vienna. Here, he preached, first in the public squares, and afterwards in the open country on account of the multitude of his hearers. He worked many miracles, raised to life a man who had been four days dead.[61] He brought about a great reformation in morals in the great city, banished usury and luxury, and persuaded a large number of young men to renounce the world and embrace religious life. Fifty of these took the habit of St. Francis. The Saint founded a convent at Vienna, which was shortly filled with two hundred novices who had been induced to give up the world through his preaching. This was one of the first communities of the Observance founded in Germany.[62] St. John Capistran added to his religious family in all these provinces. He also propagated devotion to St. Bernardine, built churches

[61] Nicholas of Fara, Chap. viii.

[62] St. James della Marca had already evangelised Germany, from 1427 to 1440, and had undergone great labours for the extirpation of heresy, but he only founded two convents in these provinces. St. John Capistran planted the Observance in Austria, Moravia, Silesia, Bohemia, Poland, etc. In 1452, Nicholas V. erected into a Province all the convents founded by St. John Capistran. On the twenty-seventh of May, 1452, Blessed Mark of Bologna succeeded our Saint as Vicar General, and named him Commissary General for the government and extension of the Order in these countries. Father Gabriel of Verona, who was at first placed at the head of the new Province of Germany, was afterwards chosen Bishop of Alba, in Transylvania, from whence he was transferred to the See of Agria, in Hungary, and created Cardinal by Sixtus IV. In 1467, the Chapter of Mantua divided this Province founded by St. John Capistran, and created the three Provinces of Austria, Bohemia, and Poland.

and erected altars to his honour, and attributed to his intercession all the miracles that he performed.[63]

On leaving Vienna, St. John Capistran received a command from God to go into Bohemia, where heresy was the most rife and powerful. Accordingly, he set out for the city of Prague, the capital of that kingdom. But Rockesane, the head of the Hussites, and the governor, George Podiebrad, opposed his entrance into Bohemia. They dreaded the presence of such a man, his miracles, learning, and apostolic freedom, and emissaries were posted all along the roads to prevent his gaining access to the country. The Saint being thus hindered from penetrating into the stronghold of heresy, set himself to evangelise the provinces bordering on Bohemia. He preached indefatigably in the towns and villages of Moravia and Silesia, and a number of Hussites, who had crossed the frontier to hear him, were brought back to the truth.

Capistran next visited Olmutz, the capital of Moravia, where error had misled many, especially among the nobility and clergy. The man of God preached in the city, aud went through the province, converting, in less than nine months, more than eleven thousand heretics. The heads of the sect were much disconcerted at seeing this apostle of the truth so close to the country of which they were masters. They did all they conld to destroy his reputation, to get him away from Moravia, and oblige him to leave the field to them. But nothing could dishearten this venerable old man. Against the calumnies of his enemies he brought forward the truth, and met their artifices with noble and courageous sincerity. He even challenged the chief of the heretics to a public conference, but could never succeed in bringing hini to the point. As soon as one pretext was overcome, another was at once raised. The heretics dreaded the sanctity of the man of God, and none of them were up to the mark of disputing with him before the people. They

[63] Christopher of Varese, Chap. xii.

tried to lay hands on Capistran several times, in order to put him to death, but the Catholics watched over him as the apple of their eye.[64]

Our Saint had no sooner arrived in Germany, than King Casimir IV. summoned him to Poland. The prince, in a very urgent letter, dated September the seventh, 1451, invited him to come into his states, where he would find plenty of opportunities for exercising his zeal. He spoke to him of the strong attachment of Poland to the Catholic Faith, and of the condition of Russia, which, though involved in the Greek schism, only awaited an opportunity to return to unity. He added, "You are certain of the result of your labours, do not then make any difficulty about coming to save numbers whose conversion depends on you. Think how many souls you will lead to Heaven by your presence, and how many, on the contrary, you will leave under the empire of Satan if you delay your coming."[65] These pressing invitations were not the only ones addressed to the man of God. He received letters from Bosnia and other countries, but, for the present, his whole attention was turned to Bohemia, the chief object of his mission. He had crossed its frontiers, and was devising means of reaching the city of Prague, the metropolis, but the governor and leaders of the sect, would not suffer him to enter it. Early in 1452, he renewed his attempts, but met with the most outrageous insults.

The leader of the sectarians, having now exhausted every stratagem of cunning and treachery, and having eluded all Capistran's proposals, no longer kept within bounds, and openly roused the nobles against him. With their support, he endeavoured to embroil him with the Pope's legate in Germany, by representing him as a man whose unseasonable zeal was the greatest obstacle to peace and the reconciliation of the Churches. The Cardinal legate, who was too far from the scene of action to be able to examine closely into the

[64] Nicholas of Fara, Chap. vii. [65] Boll., Vol. X. Oct. p. 344.

truth of these accusations, brought forward by persons of high rank, unfortunately became prepossessed against the holy religious. Under any other circumstances, John would have despised the clamour raised against him by his enemies, but the faith of a whole nation was called in question, and to be silent would have been reprehensible. Accordingly, he wrote to the Cardinal, acquainting him with the perfidious intentions of the enemies of the Church, showing up the artifices of their leader, and cautioning him to be on his guard against such men. The respectful boldness of the servant of God, struck the legate, and he acted, henceforth, with great prudence, and took upon himself the defence of John Capistran.

God blessed the many labours which the brave apostle undertook for His glory, with success, notwithstanding the hindrances which were put in the way of his apostleship. Although Capistran never succeeded in entering Prague, the capital of Bohemia, he nevertheless converted sixteen thousand Hussites in that country. These heretics had managed to imbue the Moldavians with their errors. Our Saint, being unable to visit that province, sent three of his disciples, in 1452, to defend the faith and check the inroads of heresy. In 1452, St. John was again summoned to Poland. The King and Cardinal Sbignea, Bishop of Cracow, addressed most pressing letters to him, capable of moving a heart even less zealous than his for the interests of God. He could not comply with their desires that year, for his presence was needed in Germany, which was upset by the revolutionary preaching of the heretics. He went through the towns of Germany amidst the enthusiasm of the people, preaching the word of God every day in the public squares, or in the open country. As we have already said, the population rose in a mass to see the apostolic man and to witness the miracles by which God blessed his words. On his arrival in any town, the clergy, magistrates, nobles and people, came out to meet him, and

received him with triumph. After preaching, he spent his time in redressing wrongs, reforming abuses, and confirming what was good. The licentious morals of the people, the unbridled luxury which reigned in every town, and games of chance, were severely branded by the Franciscan apostle. Never once did his words fall fruitless on these crowds, composed of sixty to a hundred thousand persons. The mere sight of him was a sermon in itself.

In all the towns in which he preached, St. John Capistran made the people bring to him immodest pictures, cards, dice, false hair and other ornaments conducing to vanity, in short, all that might be an occasion of sin, and, on an appointed day, he burnt all these objects, which had been a means of ruining many a soul, in the public squares. This solemn act was called "the Burning of the Devil's Castle." St Bernardine of Siena had introduced this custom, and all his disciples, in their missions, continued the practice. "It pleased God," says Christopher of Varese, "to show by miracles how acceptable this practice was to Him. . . When St. John Capistran had been preaching one day, at Ratisbon, against games of chance, the people brought their cards and dice to the public square to be burnt, and a certain priest, instigated by envy, blamed the Servant of God, and treated as fools those who followed his counsels. That very night, followed the judgment of God, the priest was found dead in his bed! Whilst the blessed Father was preaching at Cracow, the people brought their cards and dice, at his invitation, to a certain house to be burnt. Whilst the fire was consuming the cards and other vain objects, the house itself took fire. A freethinker present then began to say it was very lucky, as it would disabuse credulous people, who had been misled into thinking that gaming was a great sin. At that very moment, the fire went out without having caused any serious damage, and the house of the detractor took fire and was burnt to the ground." [66]

[66] Christopher of Varese, Chap. ii.

"In all the towns where he preached, St. John Capistran, at the request of the bishops and clergy, addressed special instructions to priests. He spoke to them of their duties, the vices they should avoid, and the virtues they should practise. He reproved the existing abuses and disorders, and this, with so much earnestness, humility, and fervour, that all listened to his words with as much reverence as if they had been spoken by an Angel. Except on these special occasions, he never publicly reproved the disorders of the clergy in addressing the people, and never revealed anything that might prove a subject of scandal to the faithful.[67]

Towards the close of the year 1452, St. John Capistran evangelised Silesia, which was also infected by the heresy of John Huss. Nowhere was he received more cordially, or laboured with more success. On the thirteenth of February, 1453, he reached Breslau, the capital of the province. The whole clergy, and the magistrates and people, came to meet him, received him with joy and listened to his discourses with the utmost docility. His preaching in this city produced a wonderful change in public morals, and the Saint's memory was ever after held in special veneration. The servant of God founded convents of his Order in Breslau and other towns of Silesia, worked striking miracles, and gained countless victories over heresy.

Whilst he was at Breslau, the heretics laid a snare for him, hoping thereby to cover him with ridicule and hinder the success of his mission. They placed a young man who was alive, in a coffin. Then, feigning to be Catholics, they went with much solemnity to the Saint, and in presence of the people begged him, with great marks of respect, to restore the supposed dead man to life. Divinely enlightened as to their wicked intentions, the man of God said, in a terrible voice, "Let his lot be for ever with the dead." The Hussites then began to jeer at him. "See," said they to the crowd, "See this pretended thaumaturgus, he seeks to evade

[67] Christopher of Varese, Chap. vii.

us because he cannot raise to life this dead man. You shall now see that there are amongst us more holy persons than he." They then bade one of their party restore to life the supposed corpse. The impostor to whom they applied, went up to the coffin, and called out to the young man, "Peter, arise, and return to life!" But Peter did not respond to the summons, and remained motionless. The heretic drew nearer, called him, shook him roughly, took him by the hand, but the wretched man was really dead, for God and His Saints are not to be ridiculed with impunity. Struck with terror, the heretics entered into themselves, and kneeling at the feet of the Saint abjured their errors.

There was no rest possible for the apostolic man. All the countries of the north were eager for his presence, and implored him to come among them. In August, 1433, St. John Capistran was at length able to accept the oft reiterated invitations of King Casimir and the Polish nation. He accordingly left Breslau, and, with some companions, took the road to Cracow, the capital of Poland. About two miles from the city, the pious company beheld an immense procession coming to meet them. King Casimir, accompanied by the queen mother, and the members of the royal family, Cardinal Sbignea, Bishop of Cracow, with all his clergy, the nobility, magistrates, all the soldiery, and a multitude of people, were coming to meet the man of God.

"And behold," says a biographer, "how the poor servants of the Heavenly King advance, following their leader with humble demeanour, their heads bowed, their eyes modestly cast down, their hands crossed on their breasts, their faces emaciated, their feet bare. They are clad in poor, coarse habits, girt with a cord. Everything about them breathes an air of poverty and penance. On beholding them the king was deeply moved, and those who surrounded him gave deep sighs. On the approach of the royal cortége, the religious halted, and John Capistran, their leader, approached the prince and addressed him as follows, "I salute you, illus-

'Most holy, I present to you and your kingdom, new soldiers to labour for the reformation of the Church and the glory of God. Think every wish is for your welfare and that of your subjects. They have no need of temporal goods, they covet neither lands nor property. They are disciples of poverty, and are quite content with food and clothing. As men of prayer they will intercede for you with the Most High, and if you invite them to labour for the good of your people, you will find them labourers and intrepid workers. Receive them and take them under your august protection.' The king answered, through his chancellor, that he thanked God the Author of all good a thousand times, and that he was also deeply indebted to the Apostolic See for having sent him these long desired guests. He added that he would leave nothing undone on his part, so that they might never regret having undertaken so long and difficult a journey, to come and evangelize his people."*

The religious were accompanied by the chant of the *Te Deum*, and their entrance into Cracow, as an eye witness attests us, was a perfect triumph. Next day St. John began to preach. An immense multitude from every part of the kingdom and the neighbouring provinces gathered together to see and hear him. In Poland, as in Germany, the fruit unto salvation was plentiful, and miracles abounded. Several dead persons were restored to life, and the apostolate of Capistran, like that of the Apostles, was accompanied by countless prodigies.†

It was not enough for every one to hear his words, they wished to follow in his foot steps. In the course of a few days, one hundred and thirty young men, of every age and condition, doctors and students of the University of Cracow, noblemen, to whom the world presented the most brilliant prospects, all came to place themselves under his direction,

* Extract from the *Life of Blessed Ladislaus of Gielnow*, published at Warsaw in 1633, by Father Vincent Mortowski, Definitor of the Province of the Observance in Poland. † Christopher of Varese, Chap. xii.

and receive the Franciscan habit from his hands. He built them a convent at Cracow, and placed at their head Blessed Ladislaus, who was of the royal family of Hungary, a skilful master in the science of the Saints and the direction of souls. He afterwards sent seven of his disciples to found another convent at Warsaw. Among these new postulants, was Blessed Simon of Lypnica, who was a student of the University of Cracow. Blessed John of Dukla, who had first joined the Conventuals, came and placed himself under our Saint, and passed over to the Observance. These two great servants of God, and Blessed Ladislaus of Gielnow, who were afterwards placed on the Altars of the Church, were the fairest fruits of onr Saint's apostleship in Poland.

St. John remained at Cracow, from the twenty-eighth of August, 1453, to the fifteenth of May, of the ensuing year. After having laboured with his usual burning zeal for the strengthening of the faith, the reformation of morals and the suppression of heresy in Poland, after having advocated the interests of religion with the king, the bishops and nobles, this unwearied apostle again turned his eyes towards Bohemia, the stronghold of error. But his efforts having been once more frustrated by the obstacles raised by the leader of the heretics and the governor of the kingdom, he was compelled to confine his labours to Silesia and other provinces where he was free to preach the word of God.

In 1454, he sent several of his religious into Prussia and other provinces, which he could not visit himself. His presence was called for and his counsels were sought on all sides. England, Scotland, Savoy, Burgundy, Hungary, and many other countries earnestly entreated him to come among them, but God had in store for him a far more perilous field of action for his last battles.

Mahomet II. had taken Constantinople in 1453, and the progress of his army threatened the whole of Christendom. Pope Nicholas V., on his side, as his predecessors had done before him and as his successors continued to do, repeatedly

implored the princes of Europe to take up arms against an enemy from whom they had everything to fear. The preaching of John Capistran was of great use to the Church in this difficult conjuncture. For the Christian princes were blind to the danger that threatened them, and, not perceiving the real state of the case, showed little zeal for a war against the Turks. It required nothing less than the voice of the man of God to stir up their courage, and even his success, when compared to the indescribable enthusiasm of the Crusades, was but as a small spark in comparison with a great fire. Just as faith had grown weak, so the love of great enterprizes had died out. This torpor among the German princes in sight of the ever increasing danger was a great grief to John Capistran. The Turks proud of their successes and trusting to the skill and good fortune of their leader, aimed at enlarging their empire, and they did not anticipate any serious opposition. Capistran, himself, was of the same opinion. He was aware that the Catholic princes were not up to the mark. He sought for a man throughout those vast countries, and found none. On the other thrones of Europe there was not a king worthy of the name. He wrote letter after letter to the princes of Europe. He appealed in turn to their faith, their courage, and their honour, but this noble language did not touch their souls, the counsels and ardent preaching of the man of God were powerless against self-love and private interests. Unstable resolutions, and unfulfilled vows were the only result of his efforts.

A diet was convoked at Frankfort, for September, 1454, in order to deliberate on the means of averting the danger. The legate, Eneas Sylvius, wrote to our Saint exhorting him to be present. "A diet is to meet at Frankfort," he wrote, "the whole of Germany has been convoked, to consult on the means of protecting our faith and avenging the insults offered to Our Saviour. I desire extremely to see you there, that your eloquence may arouse torpid minds, for you must not

dream that you will be able to enter Prague, those who hold out hopes to you of doing so are misleading you. Your presence at Frankfort is of the utmost importance. I would not advise you to preach the Crusade as yet in Hungary, because the Hungarians will do nothing against the Turks, unless they are certain of help from the rest of Christendom. Hence it is most important that the Diet of Frankfort should be brought to a successful issue, and this is certain to be the case if you are present."

The Saint went to Frankfort, and afterwards wrote to Nicholas V. saying that the assembly had come to no decision, and that a fresh diet had been convoked at Neustadt, for the second of February, 1455. He warned the Pope that if Hungary did not receive prompt relief, it would be laid waste by the Turks, and that the Hungarians, if abandoned by the other Christian nations, were resolved to make a truce with the Turks, which would be disastrous to Christian Europe. "As for myself," added the Saint, "although I am broken down with age, and have neither gold nor silver to offer, yet I am resolved to expose my life and to give my blood for the honour of the Name of Christ and the preservation of the faith. Tomorrow, please God, I will go to the emperor, I will urge and entreat him, for in order to meet so powerful an enemy, Germany ought to raise an army of twelve thousand horse and thirty thousand foot. Then I will proceed to Hungary, where I have been summoned by the king and princes, and by my prayers, I will at least obtain from them that they shall not sign any truce with the Turks. It is for your Holiness to console the Hungarians by your letters, and unceasingly to exhort the German princes and the emperor to contribute towards this expedition. All the princes and nobles here, say, 'Why should we sacrifice our property, our labours, and our children's bread, in fighting against the Turks, whilst the Sovereign Pontiff is building towers and palaces out of the treasury of St. Peter, which ought to be devoted to the

defence of the faith?' God knows what I reply both in public and private, though no excuse is accepted on this point. I have told you all this for the relief of my conscience, and in order that your Holiness may provide for your own honour and ward off the calamities that threaten your people."[70]

At the same time, Capistran wrote two letters in succession to Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, soliciting his concurrence in averting the perils which menaced Christendom. This prince had already displayed great zeal in the holy cause. He had assisted at a former diet at Ratisbon, and through his means considerable sums had been levied in his states for the holy war. In January, 1455, our Saint went to Vienna, and from thence to Neustadt, to assist at the diet which was to open on the second of February. Meanwhile he received a letter from Æneas Sylvius, saying, "I am not without great fears that the structure raised with so much labour at Frankfort, will fall to the ground. Our princes are wavering in mind, the kings slumber, the people are inert, and the Bark of the Fisherman, tossed by great storms, is on the point of foundering. We are all on the brink of yielding to the storm. We need to be aroused, urged, and enkindled with the sacred fire of your words. The princes of Germany, Bohemia, and Hungary will be present at the diet, and some will come from Italy and France. If you find the leaders of our people timorous and divided, make your voice heard. Be stern in rebuking their sloth, pride, and avarice, for these are the three fatal plagues which expose religion to the sword of the Turks."[71]

Capistran had at last gained all the suffrages at the Diet of Neustadt, to the cause of the faith, when the death of Nicholas V. brought the question to a standstill, and the expedition was adjourned till the following year. The Saint was informed by revelation of the Pope's death. One day, while he was discussing an important matter with the

[70] Boll., Vol. X. Oct. p. 353. [71] Boll. p. 355.

legate, he broke off the conversation, and exclaimed, "Let us kneel down, and pray for the soul of Pope Nicholas, who has just expired." The Prelate seemed little disposed to credit this assertion, but a few days later the news arrived of the death of the Pontiff, at the very time specified by St. John Capistran. The election of Calixtus III. revived hope, and no sooner was the new Pope seated on the Chair of St. Peter than he set himself to work to avert the perils of Christendom. He invited all the European princes to take up arms, and sent preachers everywhere to rouse up the people to undertake the holy war.

On the first of May, 1455, St. John Capistran wrote to the new Pope, to congratulate him on his exaltation and to draw his attention to the state of Hungary and of all Christendom, threatened by the followers of Mahomet. "Everything slumbers around us, and yet the Bishop of Pavia and the Bishop of Siena (Æneas Sylvius) have laboured hard, not to speak of my own efforts. Since the diets of Ratisbon, Frankfort, and Neustadt, it has been concluded that nothing will be done this year, and that the preparations for war are to begin next year, on the Feast of the Ascension. Oh, Most Holy Father have pity on the tears, sobs, and groans of the Greeks and Russians, who have become the prey of the enemies of the Christian name, and are sold like beasts of burthen! Have pity on Italy and on all the Christian people. Delay not to come to our assistance, for fear the same fate should befall us, like a storm which should bring about our loss and our ruin. . . . I have long been entreated to go to Hungary by the king and princes, ecclesiastical and secular, who call for my presence in that kingdom, and yielding to the exhortations of the emperor and the two legates, and to the prayers of John Hunniades, Governor of Hungary and of all the barons, I have promised to go, unless I receive contrary orders from the Holy See. I am actually on my way to the city of Buda. I, mean worm of the earth, prostrate myself at the feet of your Holiness, that you may

dispose at will of the poor breath of life that still remains in me." [72]

There was as yet no reliance to be placed on the confederation of the German princes. Meanwhile, Hungary was every day in more imminent peril, the Turks threatening to invade it. Capistran eagerly responded to the appeal which that nation made to him, and, moreover, God had before revealed to him that such was His Will. Before leaving Austria, the Saint paid a farewell visit to his dear community at Vienna, and spent some weeks with his children. On the day of his departure, he gathered them round him after Matins, exhorted them to keep faithfully the Rule, constitutions and ceremonial, recommended the Province to the care of Father Gabriel of Verona, and told them that they would meet no more on earth. His discourse lasted till daybreak. It was a very sad parting to everyone, and farewell was said amid many tears. This good pastor before he left them, knelt before each of his children and kissed their feet. Then he embarked on the Danube with his companions, on the way to Hungary.[73] Calixtus III. shortly after addressed to him letters confirming him in all his offices and privileges. The new Pope, relying on his zeal and prudence, requested him to be his co-operator, amidst the serious perils which threatened Christendom.

On entering Hungary, the Saint was everywhere received in triumph, as in the rest of Germany. In all the cities and towns, he was welcomed by the people as a Saint, a messenger from God, an apostle of Jesus Christ. Immense processions came to meet him composed of priests and religious in their vestments, carrying the relics of the Saints, amid chanting of hymns and canticles. Crowds followed, wild with joy, and eager to behold the man of God. Bishops, governors of towns, and cardinals did not think it beneath their dignity to come to meet the blessed Father, as was the

[72] *Ibid.* p. 356. [73] Christopher of Varese, Chap. xii.

case at Cracow.[74] The Saint faithfully referred to God all the honours which were paid to him, and often after a brilliant reception, he retired apart and shed bitter tears at the remembrance of his sins.

St. John Capistran having evangelized Hungary, went on into Transylvania, Wallachia, and Russia, and brought back into the Church thousands of pagans, schismatics, heretics, Hussites and Patarins. Towards the middle of the year 1455, the Hungarians convoked a diet at Buda, to deliberate on the defence of their country. Capistran was present in this assembly, consisting of the bishops and nobles of the kingdom, and his words dissipated all doubt and aroused hearty enthusiasm.

John Hunniades, called Corvin, the Waywode of Transylvania, was named generalissimo of the crusade. This soldier, one of the bravest men of his time, had been for years fighting against the Turks, and in reward for his services was made governor of the kingdom. John Capistran, on his side, went throughout Hungary, preaching the crusade. On the twenty-fifth of March, 1456, he wrote from Buda to the Pope as follows, "Several prelates and barons have received the cross from our hands, as well as a great multitude of people, and every day we give crosses to numbers. I myself have received the cross, blessed by your Holiness, from the hands of the Cardinal Legate. I shall always wear it, even though I were to shed my blood a hundred times a day in its defence."[75]

Thus John Capistran and John Hunniades were the two men chosen by God to save Christian Europe. It was by the material force of the sword, and the supernatural force of the Cross, that the enemies of the Christian name were vanquished at Belgrade. The famous victory of Belgrade over the Turks has been justly attributed by all historians to the zeal and activity of St. John Capistran, no less than to the bravery of John Hunniades. Father John of Taglia-

[74] Christopher of Varese, Chap. xii. [75] Boll., T. X. Oct. p. 361;

cozzo, our Saint's companion during the siege of Belgrade, relates the circumstances of this memorable event and the wonders God wrought by the hands of His servant, in a letter to St. James della Marca. We give an extract from this letter.[76]

"I have resolved to give your Paternity an account of this brilliant victory, gained by God's help, over the Turks. This triumph took place at Belgrade, in Hungary, in the time of the Crusade, under the standard of the Holy Cross, and through the invocation of the Name of Jesus. To God alone belongs all the honour and glory, and, after God, to the merits, labours, and prayers of the Blessed Father, John Capistran, who was appointed by the Holy See head of all the crusaders, and was assisted by the illustrious lord, John Hunniades, Governor of Hungary. May our most merciful God pour forth the dew of His grace on me a sinner, that I may relate, conscientiously and truthfully, what I have seen with my eye, and touched with my hands.

"As in 1454, after the Diet of Frankfort, the blessed Father had some doubts as to where he should go and preach with the greatest fruit for the Christian people, God showed him in a vision that his life would be crowned, not by the martyrdom of blood, but by the martyrdom of labour and suffering. On the following day, whilst he was saying Mass and praying the Lord to make known to him His will, he heard voices in the church, crying out, "To Hungary! to Hungary!" The same voices were heard in the open air, while he was preaching to the people in the public square. Having sown the seed of the word of God in Germany, and having converted sixteen thousand Hussites in Bohemia, and met with wonderful success in Poland, he set out for Hungary, in May, 1455. His arrival awakened an indescribable enthusiasm among the people, who received him as an apostle. Cardinals, bishops, abbots, prelates of churches, and all the clergy came forth to meet him, carrying the

[76] Boll., T. X. Oct. p. 366.

relics of the Saints, while the bells rang and sacred hymns were sung, the people came in crowds, bearing palms and lighted tapers, to receive him with the utmost honour. This lover of humility often changed the day or hour of his arrival, in order to avoid these demonstrations. Loved and revered as he was by all, by princes, barons and people, vast plains could alone suffice to contain the multitude who flocked from all sides to see and hear him. . . . The illustrious John Hunniades, governor and defender of the kingdom in the king's absence, conceived such an affection and veneration for the man of God, that he invited him to all his public and private councils and did nothing without his advice. John Capistran, after having evangelized Hungary, went to Transylvania, Wallachia, and Russia, where he converted thousands of schismatics and Patarins.

"On the fourteenth of February, 1456, he received the cross, at Buda, from the hands of the Cardinal Legate, with touching devotion and many tears. He immediately set out to preach the holy war to the Hungarians, and gave the cross to a great number, warning them to be in readiness to take up arms at the first summons. Meanwhile it was reported that the Turks were advancing with a formidable army and a fleet to besiege Belgrade. This fortress, situated on the frontier of Hungary, is surrounded on both sides, by the waters of the Save and the Danube. The Turks had always tried to get possession of it, in order to gain access to Hungary.

"At this news, Capistran hastened to call the crusaders to arms. He had some vessels and provisions prepared, and with some of his brethren and a small number of crusaders, he sailed down the Danube to bring a beginning of relief to the town of Belgrade. . . . On his arrival at Peterwardein, sad at heart at bringing so few defenders, he stopped at that place to say Mass. During the Holy Sacrifice he saw an arrow fall from Heaven, on which the following words were written in letters of gold, 'John, fear not, and go

on confidently with what thou hast begun, for, *by the virtue of My Name and the Holy Cross*, thou shalt be victorious over the Turks.' The Father, rejoiced and consoled by this assurance, banished all fear from his heart, and related the vision to his confessor and his brethren, these latter, encouraged by the vision, followed him joyfully, ready to suffer imprisonment and death. After this vision, he gave the cross to those of his brethren who were not yet crusaders, and desired that their priestly vestments and all belonging to them should be marked with this sacred sign. He also had a great standard made, on which were painted the Holy Cross and the figure of St. Bernardine.

"They entered Belgrade on the second of July, the feast of the Visitation. Their arrival filled the inhabitants with great joy. Now that the blessed man was among them, they no longer feared the Turks. Shortly after, messengers arrived announcing the approach of the Turkish army. On the fourth day, the infidels invested the town, to the number of one hundred and fifty thousand, or according to some, two hundred thousand. They brought with them, countless herds of camels and other beasts of burthen, laden with iustruments of war, such as carbines and gigantic bombards, capable of destroying and reducing to dust, not only the town but the highest mountains. They had, besides, seven other machines of war, from which they hurled enormous stones, day and night. These stones fell with a frightful crash, they might be seen flying through the air, and by the violence of their fall they opened the earth and were buried therein. God permitted that not one person in the city should be wounded. . . . In a word the infidels had brought by land and water, enough forces to take Belgrade and occupy the whole of Hungary. We learnt from some deserters, that Mahomet II. had sworn by his false prophet to conquer Hungary, and dine at Buda, before the end of two months.

"Seeing the city besieged by this vast multitude, prepared

to take it by assault, and then to invade Hungary, and considering on the other hand, the power of the Turks and the small number of the crusaders collected together to resist them, the blessed Father resolved to seek for help and summon all those whom he had enrolled. Before embarking, he said Mass, and addressed the crusaders in an animated discourse, exhorting them to courage and resistance, assuring them that in a short while, he would bring an army of crusaders whose numbers would astonish their enemies. Then he took with him four of his religious and said to the rest. 'Hear confessions, settle quarrels, tend the wounded, bury the dead, and preach courage and resistance to all. As to you who are priests, do not take up arms to kill or wound the enemy, your only arms are prayers, sacrifices, works of mercy, and the administration of the Sacraments. As to the lay brothers, I will prescribe nothing to them on this head, they can act as God inspires them.' . . . .

"On his arrival at Peterwardein, the Father wrote to Hunniades, who had withdrawn to one of his castles, with his family, and informed him of the great danger which threatened Christendom, entreating him, for the love of God, for the honour of the Christian name, and for his own honour to come to his assistance. Hunniades had always shown himself to be an intrepid defender of the Christian Faith and of his country. Nevertheless, he was resolved to keep aloof on this occasion, either because there was a coolness between him and the King, who had been prejudiced against him, or because he did not consider that the crusaders were equal to an encounter with the enemy's forces. Being at length won over by the pressing letters and earnest entreaties of the Father, he consented to take in hand the defence of Belgrade. It was agreed that all the crusaders should be brought together at Semlin, with some vessels, so as to force the blockade and revictual the town.

"Capistran wrote letters on all sides, and sent his religious to persuade the prelates and barons to send to him all those who had joined the crusade, and to come themselves to avert the danger. The crusaders began to flock to the appointed spot. The poor hastened thither, but the rich and the nobles did not leave their houses. From that moment, the blessed Father, inflamed with zeal for the defence of God's cause, allowed himself no time for eating, drinking or sleeping. Meanwhile, the Turks were carrying on the siege, and their bombards battered the ramparts. . . . One day, while I was saying Mass in the church belonging to the camp, when I got to the Communion, an enormous stone hurled by a bombard struck the roof of the church. Everyone ran away and left me alone. An altar was afterwards put up in the palace, and there we continued to celebrate the Divine Office. We had no hope of succour except in the direction of the Danube. But after the Father's departure, the galleys of the Turks occupied that passage, and the blockade was complete, and thus all hope of assistance was gone. Although we were prepared for martyrdom, we were in great sadness. Plague and famine devastated the city and the citadel, and we could not revictual by way of the Danube. . . . The blessed Father, hearing that the city was terribly bombarded, and that as it was entirely blocked by the Turkish galleys, it was impossible for men or provisions to enter, advised Hunniades to get ready a flotilla to break through the blockade and set free the passage of the Danube.

"In a few days, more than two hundred boats were collected together, and were filled with arrows, ballistas, carbines, provisions were added and the crusaders then embarked. The hero of God, after a fervent exhortation, ordered them to invoke and proclaim, by land and water, nothing but the Holy Name of Jesus. The besieged were warned that on the following Wednesday, they must prepare an attack with men of war, on the rear of the Ottoman fleet,

while the crusaders attacked it in front. On the appointed day, the fleet of the crusaders went down the river, whilst the vessels of the besieged went up it. The Turkish galleys were thus surrounded by the enemy, and a great battle began. The blessed Father standing on the bank and holding the sacred standard, ceased not to pray and invoke the Name of Jesus. The Turkish fleet was destroyed by the crusaders, the course of the Danube was set free, and the besieged were filled with joy and hope.

"The infidels thus beaten on the river, redoubled their efforts by land to take the city. They battered the walls and towers, and made numberless breaches. They filled up the wide moats that encompassed the city with bundles of straw and heaps of stones, so as to form a passage into the place. After the naval victory, our blessed Father, with Hunniades and the crusaders they brought, entered the citadel. During the nine days following, more than sixty thousand crusaders joined them. They arrived in companies. Each company was led by a priest or religious, and had its own standard, on which was painted the figure of St. Francis, St. Antony of Padua, St. Louis, or St. Bernardine, as if to show that they had been enrolled by the Friars Minor. They were pious, sober, chaste, full of charity towards one another, assiduous at the Divine Office, and regular in frequenting the Sacraments, and all were resolved to shed their blood for Jesus Christ. They would acknowledge no one but the blessed Father as their leader, and they obeyed him as a novice obeys his Superior. He often preached to them and exhorted them to constancy, defence of the faith, and martyrdom. 'Whether you advance, or whether you retreat,' he said, 'whether you strike or whether you are struck, invoke the Name of Jesus, for there is no other Name whereby we must be saved.'

"It must be observed, that among this multitude of crusaders, there were no Hungarian barons or lords, except the great Hunniades and his noble family, to defend Chris-

tendom in peril, although a large number had taken the cross. All those who had responded to the call of Capistran and his religious, were mostly men of the lower orders, peasants, poor men, students, religious men, hermits, and members of the Third Order of St. Francis. They had neither horses, lances, nor cuirasses. Like David, they marched against Goliah with slings and stones. Their head and leader was the blessed Father, who guided them like another Moses or Josue. During the eleven days following the naval victory, the blessed Father remained night and day with the crusaders, incessantly exhorting them to courage, constancy and martyrdom. He went through untold fatigues. He slept on the bare ground, and hardly ate anything. Although he was past seventy, he bore vigils and continual labours with more courage than the strongest men, and never ceased to preach, instruct, rebuke and command.

"Meanwhile the bombardment went on. The walls were in ruins, and the great tower, which was split in two, was shaken to its foundations. The Turks, seeing that the number of the crusaders had daily increased since the raising of the siege, resolved on a general attack. At the sight of all the preparations for the attack, John Hunniades came by night to the blessed Father, and said, 'My Father, we are defeated, we shall infallibly perish. I have done what I could and I now see no further means of defence. The citadel cannot again be repaired, our towers are thrown down, all the walls are destroyed, and the breach is already made. We are very numerous, it is true, but our men are weak, unarmed, and wholly ignorant of the science of war. The barons are not coming, what more can we do?' The Father replied, 'Fear not, noble lord, God is powerful, and He can, by means of weak instruments, destroy the power of the Turks, defend the town, and confound our enemies.'

"In fact, God had permitted everything that happened, in order to render the prodigy wrought by His right Hand,

more evident and wonderful, and, above all, that the event might be attributed to His power alone. Hunniades refused to go back into the citadel. 'Tomorrow,' said he, 'it will be ours no longer. The Turks will occupy it.' The Father at these words, replied. 'Fear not, the citadel will be ours. We are defending the cause of God, and the Name of Christ. I am certain that God will make His cause to triumph.'

"The blessed Father then chose out four thousand of the stongest, bravest, and most faithful crusaders, and unfurling his standard, he led them into the citadel, exhorted them to constancy, courage and martyrdom, and bade them invoke and proclaim the Name of Jesus, promising them that by virtue of this Holy Name the Christians would be victorious. He left five of his religious in the citadel, bidding them provide for the spiritual needs of the crusaders, and prepare for martyrdom, if such should be God's Will.

"Towards the hour of Vespers, on the eve of St. Mary Magdalene, the Turks approached the citadel, uttering loud cries. They were like so many roaring lions eager to devour their prey. The crusaders, standing on the ruined walls, sent arrows, ballistas and bomb-shells at them, killing and wounding a great number. The daylight was obscured by the flight of arrows. The combatants on both sides uttered loud cries. The infidels invoked the name of Mahomet, the Christians called on the Sacred Name of Jesus. The blessed Father, on his knees, in the midst of the soldiers, prayed like another Moses, and said, 'Lord, save Thy people.'

"Towards midnight, the Turks made a fresh onslaught on the citadel, and the Christians resisted them and drove them back. But the crusaders, being now tired and exhausted, resisted with less energy, and the Turks gained possession of the first precinct. The blessed Father then made more soldiers come into the citadel, and when the infidels were about to take possession of the second precinct, the crusaders energetically resisted them. A desperate

fight ensued, near the drawbridge. All of a sudden, the crusaders, as if inspired by the Holy Spirit, took a quantity of wood and briars, set fire to it, and threw the blazing mass among their assailants. Not one of them escaped alive out of the flames. Those who came after them, drew back appalled, and took to flight, crying, 'Let us retreat! The God of the Christians is fighting for them!' Next day, the ditches were seen filled with innumerable dead bodies, of Turks either killed in the fight or burnt to death. Only sixty Christians had received the crown of martyrdom. . . .

"But the grand victory, which was gained some days later outside the city, more clearly displayed the power of God, and the *virtue of the Holy Name of Jesus, and of His Holy Cross.* After the check sustained by the Turks, and the deliverance of the city, Hunniades had forbidden the crusaders to make any sallies, for fear that the Turks seeing a multitude so unskilled in fighting, might take courage and attempt a fresh attack. The blessed Father, however, went out of the city, preceded by his standard, and marched towards the infidel camp, followed by the crusaders, proclaiming together with him the Name of Jesus. On reaching the moat which protected the enemy's camp, they fixed their standards in the ground. At this sight, the Turks were seized with a panic, but they ranged themselves in battle array and rushed upon the crusaders. These latter let fly their arrows, and like their blessed Father, called on the Name of Jesus. At this cry, which resounded like thunder, the infidels were terrified. Some took to flight, others were thrown from their horses, and their arms fell from their grasp. The crusaders pursued them. . . . The formidable army of the Crescent was cut to pieces, its remnants scattered, and Mahomet II. himself, wounded and on the point of being taken prisoner, was forced to fly, leaving the field of battle strewn with an immense number of his soldiers."

"Such was this famous and memorable victory," says Christopher of Varese "which was won *by the power of*

the Name of Jesus, so ardently invoked by Blessed John Capistran."[77]

Nicholas of Fara on his part, says, "It was not by force of arms that the Lord Jesus broke the pride of the enemies of the Christian name, *but by the sole invocation of His Most Holy Name*, and by the labours and exertions of John Capistran, His most faithful servant."[78] Some of the Turks who were taken prisoners, were asked why their troops, though so well-armed and numerous, had taken flight before such an inferior force. They replied, that they had been terrified on hearing mysterious voices in the air calling on the Holy Name of Jesus.[79]

At the news of this celebrated victory, Pope Calixtus III. was thrilled with emotion, he was then past eighty and on the verge of the tomb. In memory of the great event, he instituted the Feast of the Transfiguration of our Lord. A few weeks after the siege of Belgrade, Hunniades died in the arms of St. John Capistran, as great in presence of death, as he had been on the field of battle. St. John Capistran soon followed his friend. He might well say with the great Apostle, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the Faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice." Broken by age and unheard of fatigues, and consumed by a continual fever, this great servant of God met death with the calmness of a soul raised above all earthly things. He himself asked for the Last Sacraments, and received them with many tears. Then, stretched on the bare ground like his Seraphic Father, his eyes fixed on Heaven, and his soul full of hope, he fell asleep peacefully in the Lord, aged seventy-one. It was on the twenty-third of October, 1456, about three months after the victory of Belgrade. During his illness, he had been visited by King Ladislaus, the Cardinal Legate, and the nobles of the kingdom.

[77] Chap. xiii. [78] Chap. viii.

[79] Christopher of Varese, Chap. xiii.

Our Saint died in the convent of Villak, near Sirmium.[80] He was buried in the church of that community. People flocked in numbers to his tomb, countless miracles were wrought by his intercession, and several dead persons were raised to life. In 1521, the Turks having taken Belgrade, made incursions into Sclavonia, and took possession of the castle of Villak, in 1526. The Franciscan convent was destroyed, and it was not known what had become of the precious remains of our Saint. But of late years, a manuscript has been found, in the archives of the ancient Franciscan Province of Bulgaria, which gives a certain clue to the place where the body of St. John Capistran rests. According to this manuscript, the Turks took possession of the precious relic during their incursions into Hungary, and sold it to a rich lord, who gave it to a community of schismatic Basilians. In this monastery, which is at Bistrica,[81] in Wallachia, the body of the Saint is said to be preserved quite incorrupt, and clothed in the Franciscan habit. This manuscript was written in 1765, by Father Blase Kleiner, Provincial of Bulgaria, who had been to Bistrica and had identified the holy relic.[82]

St. John Capistran was canonized by Alexander VIII., in 1690. As early as 1515, Leo X. had given permission that the town of Capistrano should celebrate an Office in his

[80] Villak is a small town in Sclavonia, on the right bank of the Danube. It is now called Illak, and forms part of Hungary, and consequently of the Austrian States. It is not to be confounded with the town of Villak in Carinthia, which is between Friuli and Vienna.

[81] This little town is in the kingdom of Roumania.

[82] This manuscript was discovered in 1874, by Father Eusebius Fernendzin, a Franciscan, whom Mgr. Strossmayer, Bishop of Sirmium, had directed to make researches on the matter. In 1861, the Bollandists had already given this as a very probable opinion, in their tenth Volume of October (p. 434.). The sacristan of the schismatic monastery declared that when he entered the church at night, he had often seen some Friars Minor singing Psalms round the Saint's tomb, who disappeared at his approach.

honour. (His feast is kept on this day throughout the whole Order.)

O Christi miles inclite,
Joannes, voce et opere,
Diebus his novissimis
Clarus apparuisti.

O illustrious soldier of Christ, John, thou hast immortalised thyself, in these latter days, by thy words and works.

Tu Cruce Turcas fugas,
Tu Cruce morbos sanas,
Tu Cruce cunctos juvas,
Dux quibus fuisti,

By the Cross, thou hast put the Turks to flight, by the Cross, thou dost expel diseases, by the Cross thou dost help all whose leader thou wast.

Implora nobis veniam,
Ac fidei constantiam,
Christi legis custodiam,
Quam vere dilexisti.

Implore for us forgiveness and constancy in faith, and fidelity to the law of Christ which thou didst love so much.

O lumen Italiæ, stella Bohemorum,
Nova lux Germaniæ, pavor Barbarorum,
Clara fax Hungariæ, decus Polonorum,
Joannes, cuncta attrahens corda peccatorum,
Signis et miraculis ad regna cœlorum,
Audi preces supplicum, ad te devotorum.[83]

O Light of Italy, Star of Bohemia,
New splendour of Germany, terror of barbarians,
Brilliant torch of Hungary, glory of Poland,
John, who dost attract the hearts of all sinners, by signs and miracles, to the kingdom of Heaven.
Hear the suppliant prayers of those who are devout to thee.

[83] This antiphon is chanted every day by our religious, in the convent of Vienna, in Austria.

October 25.

Blessed Francis of Calderola. Priest.

[1507.]

Of the Order of the Friars Minor of the Observance.

This blessed man was born at Calderola in the diocese of Camerino. Faithful to the call of God, he entered among the Friars of the Observance of the Province of the Marches. At this time, the great servants of God, St. James della Marca, Blessed Mark of Montegallo, Blessed Peter of Molliano, and a number of others eminent in sanctity, belonged to this Province. Francis followed faithfully in their footsteps. His whole life was consecrated to the glory of God and the salvation of souls. An insatiable zeal for the conversion of sinners consumed him, he spent whole days in preaching, catechizing, and hearing confessions, and when his exhausted frame needed rest, he prolonged his vigils far into the night in order that his apostleship might be strengthened by the help of prayer and penance. Blessed Francis had gone through his studies with the greatest success and was a brilliant orator, yet he never made a show of learning in his sermons. His instructions were always simple and not above the comprehension of any one. He loved to quote anecdotes from the Lives of the Saints.

Wherever the blessed man came it was as an angel of peace. He had received a special gift from God for appeasing anger

[1] Wadding, Gonzaga, and Mark of Lisbon, mention Blessed Francis but give few details about his life.

and strife and for reconciling enemies. The most embittered hearts could not resist his touching appeals. Francis was a devoted servant of our Blessed Lady and proclaimed her praises everywhere, extolled her great privileges, and sought by all means in his power to make her honoured and loved. He carved with his own hands an image of the Blessed Virgin and gave it to a confraternity which he had founded. This statue afterwards worked many miracles, and Pius VII. crowned it on his return from exile.

After having laboured for many years in the vineyard of the Father of the family and brought back to God an immense number of sinners, Blessed Francis slept the sleep of the just at the convent of Colfano, near Calderola, on the twelfth of September, 1507. His bones are preserved in the convent of Colfano, but his heart, which has remained incorrupt, is exposed in a separate reliquary. Devotion to him was approved by Gregory XVI. His feast is only kept by the Friars of the Observance.

October 26.

Blessed Bonaventure of Potenza. Priest.

[1651—1711.]

Of the Order of Conventual Friars Minor.

This great servant of God was born at Potenza, an episcopal town in the kingdom of Naples. His parents were poor but virtuous, and they trained him to piety from his earliest years.[1] From his babyhood, the child was remarkable for his modesty, innocence, love of prayer, and a virginal purity which shed its fragrance over his whole life. He began while very young to practise penance. He wore a hairshirt, took the discipline, and fasted on Saturdays and the Vigils of Feasts of our Lady, whom he loved with childlike affection. A good priest undertook to teach him the rudiments of Latin, and, at fifteen, he took the Franciscan habit at Nocera, among the Conventual Friars Minor of the Province of Naples. After his profession he went through his studies in the convent of Malatoni, and if his progress in learning was rapid, still more rapid was his progress in the ways of God. Having been thus prepared, Bonaventure was promoted to the priesthood. But it was especially during the eight years he spent in the convent of Amalfi, that he made a most astounding progress in sanctity. He had for his director, while there, a man of great virtue, Father Dominic

[1] These details are from a life of Blessed Bonaventure, taken from the acts of the apostolic processes and published at Rome by a Conventual Father.

of Muro, whose first object was to train him to obedience, and, indeed, obedience seems to have been the characteristic virtue of Blessed Bonaventure.

One day, he told his master that the key of the sacristy was lost. "Well then," replied Father Dominic, smiling, "you must look for it, at the bottom of the cistern. Take a line, and fish up your key." Bonaventure, without hesitating, took a fish-hook and fastened it to the end of a cord, threw it on the surface of the water, and feeling that something heavy was caught on it, he drew in his line and there was the key. God was pleased to reward his perfect obedience by this miracle. Whilst he was in the convent at Capri, a small island in the Gulf of Naples, the Guardian being one day with him in an inner oratory of the community, left him, saying, "Stay here, Father Bonaventure, until I return from the port, I must go to Naples, and I want to find out the hours for departure." When he reached the port, a vessel was just weighing anchor before sailing for Naples. He embarked, and was absent for three days. On his return, not seeing Father Bonaventure, he enquired for him. The religious replied, "We have not seen him for three days, and we thought he had gone with you." Alarmed at his disappearance, the Superior sought for him everywhere, and at last found him in the place where he had left him. He obeyed like a child without reasoning. He used to say, "I would go to the very depths of Hell out of obedience."

It was the will of God that His servant should give an example of obedience even after death. Long after he had expired, it was remarked that the circulation of his blood continued. The Vicar General of the Bishop requested the surgeon to bleed him in the arm, and he said to the deceased, "Father Bonaventure, give us, your arm." But the body remained motionless. Then turning to the Superior the Vicar General said, "Father Guardian, command him in the name of holy obedience to give us his arm." No sooner

had the Guardian given the order than the blessed man raised his right arm and presented it to the surgeon. It may be imagined with what fear and admiration the by-standers beheld this action.

About thirty years after his death, in 1740, an apostolic commission, composed of three bishops, was appointed to proceed to the identification of the body. The coffin was opened, and the body of the blessed man was found perfectly untouched, supple, flexible and emitting a sweet odour. Another coffin had been prepared, supposed to be more suitable, but when an attempt was made to place the body in it, it was found to be too narrow, but at the command of one of the bishops, the arms and shoulders of the venerable body contracted, so that it could easily be placed in the coffin, in the sight of the astonished beholders.

Humility was the inseparable companion of obedience in Bonaventure. It was once proposed to make him Guardian of the convent at Capri and afterwards of that at Ravello, but owing to his earnest entreaties he obtained a promise that he should never be raised to any dignities in the Order. His life was always humble, hidden and wholly given up to the Will of God. However, he was forced to accept, for a time, the charge of master of novices in the convent of Nocera. Humility and obedience were the virtues which he was most careful to instil into his young disciples, but he never ordered them to do anything that he had not first done himself, thus forming them to virtue by his example even more than by his words. When he spoke to them of our Lord's Passion, and of His love for men, his eyes seemed to flash fire, and he was raised from the ground.

When he was dying, he made a public confession which drew tears from all present, as it revealed to them the treasures of humility hidden in his soul. With deep compunction he told them, "I have been the most unworthy creature and the most infamous sinner in the world. By my laxity I have given scandal to my brethren and to

persons in the world, wherefore, I humbly ask pardon of God and of all of you." Then, turning to the Superior, he added, "I confess, my father, that I was unworthy to wear the habit or bear the name of a religious, but, before I die, forgive me, I beg of you, my sins and all my transgressions of the Rule, and allow me to throw myself at your feet, as a mark of my repentance." The dying man was about to attempt to rise that he might kiss the feet of his Superior, but the latter forced him to remain in his bed and gave him the crucifix, of which Bonaventure tenderly kissed the feet and bathed them with his tears.

Blessed Bernardine was a faithful follower of the Seraphic Patriarch and jealously guarded the precious treasure of poverty. This virtue shone forth in his patched habit, his cell, and all that was allotted to his use. The Conventuals, as is known, have obtained from the Church, dispensations as to certain precepts with regard to poverty. For example, the Holy See has given them permission to use money, and at their profession they bind themselves to keep all the precepts of the Rule, except those from which the Church has dispensed their branch of the Order. Hence Blessed Bonaventure might have lawfully made use of these dispensations, but he availed himself of them as seldom as possible. If money was given to him for his journeys, he would give back what was over to his Superior on his return, rather than keep the money in his cell. One day, the Guardian left a certain sum with him which was to be given to the brother who had care of the money belonging to the convent, when he came home. As this brother was long in returning, the servant of God went to the door to wait for him, and as soon as he saw him coming in the distance, he called out, "My dear Father, for the love of God make haste." The religious hurried, fearing that some accident had happened. Father Bonaventure handed him the money, and then only did he recover his tranquillity. Bonaventure had a hot temper by nature, was hasty and given to anger, but

by force of doing violence to himself, and by self denial, he had overcome himself, by the grace of God, and had acquired a patience proof against everything and the most unalterable meekness. He once owned to his confessor that undeserved reproofs, injustice, or any wrong done to him, made his blood boil and his heart beat violently although he kept silence. He would say on these occasions to himself, "Burst and die, if thou wilt, but thou shalt not answer a word." This angelic meekness he displayed on several occasions, when insults, outrages and calumnies were showered upon him. He bore them all in silence and without betraying the least emotion.

The austerities of Blessed Bonaventure were fearful. On Fridays, especially, he scourged himself so unmercifully in memory of our Lord's Passion, that the walls of his cell were all besprinkled with his blood. As indulgent to others as he was severe to himself, he once said to one of his brothers who wished for a hairshirt as severe as his own, "No, no, you are too young and delicate, this is only fit for me who am old and have a tough skin." No words can express his tender and compassionate charity for the poor, the sick, and the afflicted. As to his zeal for the salvation of souls, it was unwearied and knew no bounds. The islands of Capri and Ischia, and the towns of Naples and Ravello where he chiefly lived, were, in turns, the scene of his evangelic ministry. One sermon of his was generally enough to bring back the most hardened sinners to God. Nothing disheartened him. He would follow people, sometimes, into their homes, and even into the fields where they were at work, like the Prince of Pastors, in his persevering search after the lost sheep. His confessional was besieged by penitents, and he sometimes spent whole days in it until he fell fainting with fatigue and exhaustion. An epidemic having broken out in a village near Naples, the servant of God hastened to the assistance of the sufferers. He tended them, rendered them the humblest services, cured a great number, and never

rested till he was broken down by fatigue and by a severe fever which brought him to death's door. The illness was a long one and exceedingly painful. Amid all his sufferings, Bonaventure praised and blessed the Lord, Who, as he said, had given him so great a proof of His love on this occasion. As soon as he was somewhat better he again returned to his labours of zeal and charity.

Blessed Bonaventure was all his life a zealous servant of Mary. When preaching, he always endeavoured to instil into his hearers love and confidence towards our Blessed Mother. He never undertook any matter without placing it under her protection and saying three *Aves*. "O how I wish I was another Duns Scotus," he sometimes exclaimed, "that I might defend the Immaculate Conception of Mary!" He used to say that he would gladly shed the last drop of his blood in defence of that glorious prerogative of the Mother of God.

The apostolic ministry of the holy man was accompanied by the supernatural gifts which God reserves for His most favoured servants. He was endowed in a large measure with the gift of miracles, prophecy, and insight into hearts. During the long hours which he spent in contemplation, and sometimes during mass, he would be rapt in ecstacy and lifted from the ground.

Bonaventure had attained his sixty-first year and had spent forty-five years in the religious state, his soul was rich with virtues and merits. The hour of his eternal reward was at hand. His last illness was of ten days duration. As his last hour drew near he received the Last Sacraments of the Church and fell into an ecstacy. On coming to himself, a strange thing happened of which there are few examples in the lives of the Saints. This old man, weakened by austerities and with a palate parched by fever, began to sing psalms and hymns with a voice so fresh and clear and in a tone so sweet that to those present it seemed an angelic melody. The blessed man went on singing thus for twenty-

four hours without break, and yet his voice lost none of its strength or sweetness. About an hour before he died, he became silent, as though to recollect himself and prepare his soul for death. Blessed Bonaventure fell asleep peacefully in the Lord, on the twenty-sixth of October, 1611, at the convent of Ravello, and was buried in the church of that community. Many miracles were worked at his tomb, and Pius VI. beatified him on the twenty-sixth of November, 1775. His feast is kept by the Conventuals and the Capuchins.

October 29.

Blessed Paula Montaldi. Virgin.

[1443—1514.]

Of the Order of St. Clare.

On the hills which rise to the right of the Mincio, and extend towards the west as far as Castiglione, the native place of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, may be seen the small town of Volta, and close to it, the village of Montaldi. In this village, belonging to the diocese of Mantua, Blessed Paula first saw the light, in 1443. She came of the honoured and pious family of Montaldi.[1] From her infancy Paula was remarkable for her rare modesty, angelic innocence, and strong attraction to piety. She was even then called "*the little Saint*," by the people, who admired her precocious virtue. Contempt for the world and its pleasures grew in her with her growth, and one day, in answer to the call of grace, she left her father's house, and went to Mantua, to consecrate herself to God in the Order of St. Clare. This was in 1458, when Paula was fifteen.

The city of Mantua possessed, at that time, three convents

[1] Donesmondi, in his History of Mantua, mentions Blessed Paula. Wadding also speaks of her in the fifteenth Volume of his Annals.

of Clares, also subject to the jurisdiction of the Friars of the Observance. First, that of St. Clare, founded by St. Agnes of Assisi, and inhabited by Urbanists. That of the Blessed Sacrament, established in 1420, by the advice of St. Bernardine of Siena, by John Francis Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua, and his wife, Blessed Paula Malatesta, ancestors of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, and of our own Venerable Francis Gonzaga who was General of the Order, and afterwards Bishop of Mantua. This fervent community followed the First Rule of St. Clare, and obtained that the same Rule should be followed in several other houses in Italy. There was besides a third convent, founded in 1380, called St. Lucy's, where, as in the first named, the Rule of St. Clare mitigated by Urban IV. was observed. Blessed Paula chose this convent and took the habit of the Urbanist Clares.

As soon as she was a nun, Paula devoted all the energies of her soul to the acquisition of the virtues befitting her state. She employed long vigils, disciplines, and vigorous fasts to subdue her body, whilst unintermitting prayer gave a powerful impulse to her soul in its flight towards Heaven. And the God of Love, Who is ever impatient to pour Himself out into the hearts of those who love Him, gave her a delicious foretaste thereof in the raptures and ecstacies with which He favoured her. Though thus enriched with supernatural gifts and the rarest virtues, Paula looked upon herelf as the last and the least of those who dwelt in this holy abode.

Her sisters duly appreciated her merits and chose her three times for their abbess. The monastery never contained so many nuns far advanced in perfection, thanks to the sweetness, prudence, and unequalled humility of this Superior after God's own Heart. The fame of her sanctity spread far and wide. Many persons resorted to the convent of St. Lucy to be cured of their infirmities, to obtain her advice or to recommend themselves to her prayers. The devil was furious at the good done by the handmaid of Jesus Christ, and attacked her violently. But the humble daugh-

ter of St. Clare, trusting to the grace of her Heavenly Spouse, fought courageously, and gained many victories over her enemy.

Having served our Lord in the humble habit of a Poor Clare for fifty-six years, Blessed Paula was called to the Heavenly Nuptials on the eighteenth of August, 1514, being more than seventy years old. Her body which remained incorrupt, was for a long time kept in the church of her convent, and was an object of universal veneration. In 1782, the Emperor of Austria, Joseph II., having suppressed the three communities of Poor Clares, at Mantua, the precious remains of Blessed Paula were transferred to another place. The people of Volta at last obtained the body of their illustrious countrywoman. They placed it in a magnificent tomb, under the altar of the Blessed Virgin, where it still remains, honoured by the respect and veneration of the faithful. The *cultus* of Blessed Paula Montaldi was approved by Pius IX., on the sixth of October, 1866. Her feast is only kept by the Observance.

October 30.

Blessed Liberato of Lauro. Priest.

[1260.]

Of the Order of Friars Minor.

Liberato was born in the March of Ancona, early in the thirteenth century. He came of the noble family of the Counts of Brunforte. He was inspired by the Holy Ghost to renounce the world and its vain hopes and he took the habit of St. Francis in a solitary convent called Soffiano, near the lordly castle of Brunforte.

After having been ordained priest, he spent the rest of his life in this solitude, and applied himself so earnestly to the practice of every virtue, that he very soon became a living

rule to his brethren. He often spent whole days and nights in contemplation. Silence, solitude, and the spirit of prayer had become so dear to him, that he very rarely spoke even to his own brethren. When obliged to answer those who spoke to him, his words seemed rather those of an angel than of a man. It is not surprising that a soul so perfect, and a heart so enkindled with Divine love, should have been favoured with supernatural gifts and frequent ecstacies and raptures. Worn out by his austerities no less than by the ardour of his charity, he welcomed joyfully the hour of his deliverance. In his last moments, he conversed with his brethren around him on the glory which he was shortly to possess, and full of holy joy slept peacefully in the Lord, about the year 1260.

His body was removed, with the relics of Blessed Humilis and Pacificus to a place near Camerino, since called "St. Liberato," in the diocese of Camerino. There the blessed man has received the veneration of the faithful, and numerous miracles, obtained through his intercession, have made his name famous in those parts.[1] His *cultus* was approved by Pius IX., in 1868. His feast is only kept by the Friars of the Observance.

[1] Father Arthur, in his Martyrology, has confounded Blessed Liberato of Lauro with Blessed Liberato of Macerata. The former died in the March of Ancona, the latter in the convent of St. Angelo della Vena, near Viterbo. This latter was one of those zealous followers of the Rule, to whom St. Celestine V. gave permission to undertake a reform in order to live in a more strict observance, whilst the first-named led an essentially contemplative life.

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